mamotte shugogetten

Minene Sakurano

6

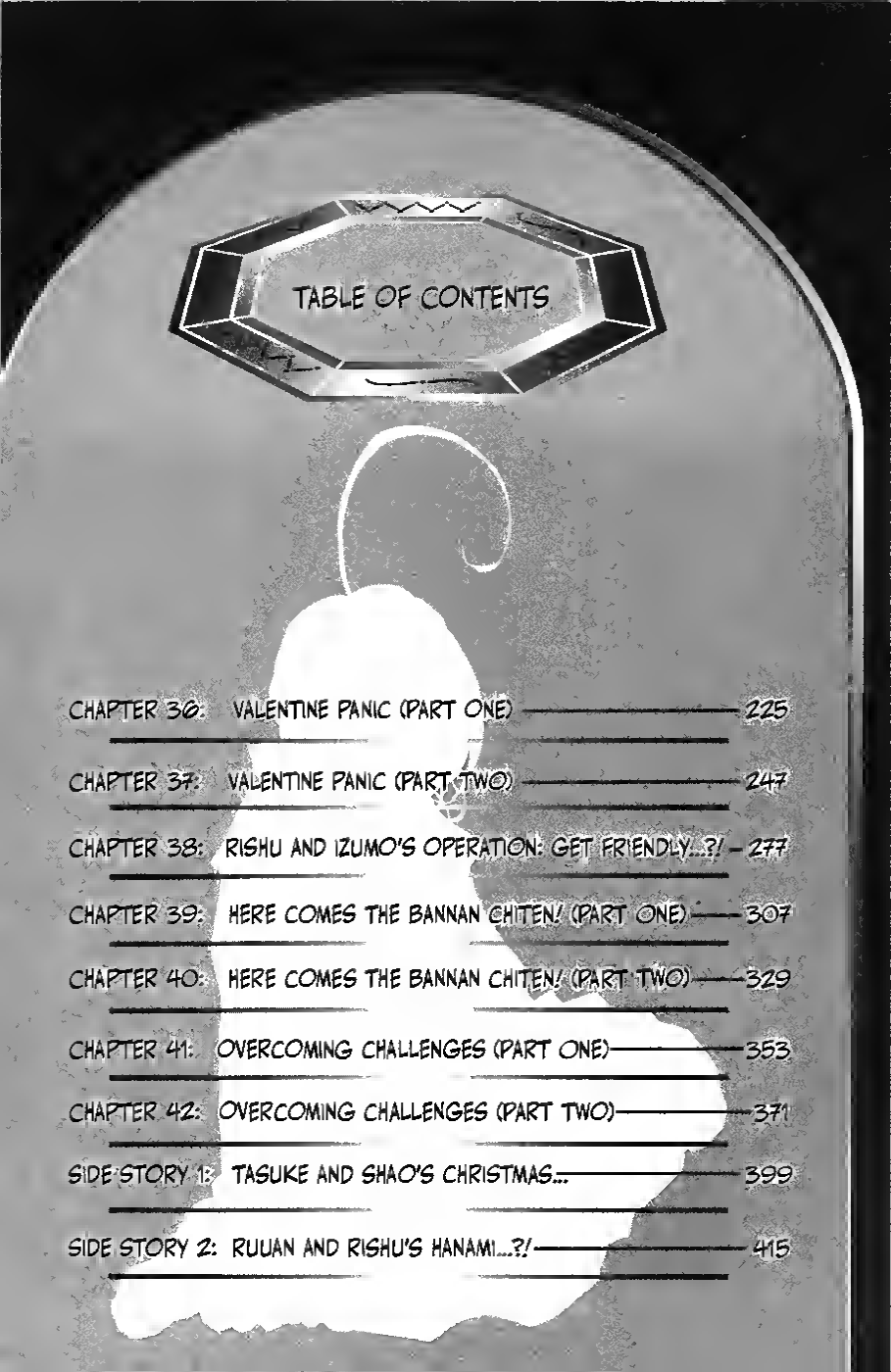


TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36: VALENTINE PANIC (PART ONE) ——— 225

CHAPTER 37: VALENTINE PANIC (PART TWO) ——— 247

CHAPTER 38: RISHU AND IZUMO'S OPERATION: GET FRIENDLY...?! — 277

CHAPTER 39: HERE COMES THE BANNAN CHITEN! (PART ONE) ——— 307

CHAPTER 40: HERE COMES THE BANNAN CHITEN! (PART TWO) ——— 329

CHAPTER 41: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES (PART ONE) ——— 353

CHAPTER 42: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES (PART TWO) ——— 371

SIDE STORY 1: TASUKE AND SHAO'S CHRISTMAS... ——— 399

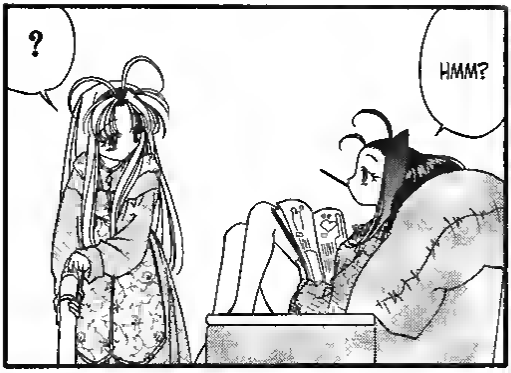
SIDE STORY 2: RUUAN AND RISHU'S HANAMI...?! ——— 415

CHAPTER 36
VALENTINE PANIC (PART ONE)

IZUMO

TASUKE...
はぁ
はぁ
THANKS, KAORI. ♡
I GOT YOU SOMETHING, AS A TOKEN OF MY AFFECTION.
PLEASE ACCEPT THIS GIFT!!

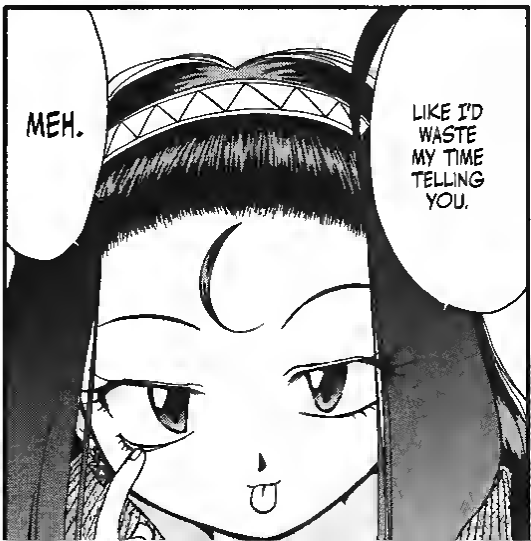
YEP! THE DAY I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR IS ONLY ONE WEEK AWAY...
EEEEGADS! I WISH IT WAS THE 14TH ALREADY!
ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.
K.A.O.R.I.♡
THANKS, KAORI. ♡
THANKS, KAORI. ♡
THANKS, KAORI. THANKS, KAORI.
ECHO
... WHEN ...
THAT'S THE SPECIAL DAY...
...KAORI CONFESSES HER FIRST LOVE. (BLUSH)
SALT
ビば
ビば
GO, KAORI!


?
HMM?

HMM,
I SEE...

MWA
HA
HA.
?
MWA
HA
HA
HA.
?
?

MISS
RUUAN?
WITH THIS,
MASTER
TAA WILL
BE ALL
MIIINE.
♡
YIPPEE!


MEH.
LIKE I'D
WASTE
MY TIME
TELLING
YOU.

VALEN-
TINE'S
DAY IS...
...A MAGICAL
DAY ONCE A
YEAR WHEN
WOMEN
IN LOVE
ARE GIVEN
STRENGTH.
OH, CUPID OF
LOVE, PLEASE
GIVE ME THE
COURAGE
TO TELL MY
BELOVED
HOW I FEEL.

HUH?
FOR ME?
FOR YOU, TAKASHI!!
YES.
YOUR HEART JUST COULDN'T RESIST, EH?
TAKASHI
BUT I'M SORRY, KAORI.
YOU COULDN'T WAIT UNTIL VALENTINE'S DAY...
...BECAUSE OF THE IRRESISTIBLE MANLINESS OOZING FROM THIS SMEXY AURA THAT IS MY BEING.
SIGH...

EVEN IF MY FEELINGS...
...NEVER REACH MY BELOVED SHAO...
...I CAN NEVER ACCEPT YOUR CHOCOLATE. NEVER!
OH, NO, TAKASHI, I'M NOT GIVING YOU MY CHOCOLATE! I JUST WANT YOU TO TASTE IT!!
OH, RIGHT...
I KNEW THAT.
HOW EMBARRASSING.
WHA...? FOR ME?!
HMM... LOOKS OKAY.
YOU THINK SO?
YES. ♡
FOR YOU!
COULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME HOW IT TASTES? ♡
I MADE THEM MYSELF.
EAT ME. ♡
I'M YUMMY. ♡
HEY!!
YOUTENSHIN CHOCOLATE! ♡

AAAAAGH!!
WELL, I GUESS I'LL TRY THEM FOR YOU.
LET'S SEE HERE.
ドキ
ドキ
MISS RUUAN, I CAN'T EAT THAT!
IT'S OKAY. JUST EAT IT.
REALLY. HIS JAW'S JUST TOO WEAK!!
MY LOVE IS STRONG, Y'KNOW.
MAYBE TABASCO DOESN'T MIX WITH CHOCOLATE.
TEE HEE. ♡ I MESSED UP A TEENY BIT.
M-MISSSTH RU-RUUAN, AAAH, NNGH!
GUH... DISGUSTING... I'M GONNA DIE!
ゴゴゴゴ
I'M GLAD I MADE A LOT.

WHEW. I'M BACK.
DONE CLEANING THE TOILET--
HUH...?
TASUKE!!
IT'S YOUR FAULT
YOU DID THIS
WH-WHAT THE...?
MISS SHOUKO, DID YOU JUST HEAR MASTER TASUKE SCREAM?
HUH? I DIDN'T HEAR ANY-THING.
!!

AS THE SUN SETS, SPILLING ITS RADIANT COLORS INTO THE CLASS-ROOM...
...A STU-DENT AND TEACHER ARE...
...ALONE... TOGE-THER.
MASTER TAAAA.
WHY DID YOU WANT ME TO MEET YOU HERE?
UUMM, YOU KNOW, RUUAN...
RUUAN KNEW YOU'D COME AROUND!!
ABOUT.. THE WAY YOU FEEL... ABOUT ME...
WHAT I MEAN IS...
...UM... I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I'M FLATTERED OR WHATEVER...
...BUT ...
...I...

NON, NON, NON. ♡
SHHHH! I HAVEN'T OFFERED YOU YOUR CHOCOLATE!
OU CAN'T EPLY YET. THAT'S AGAINST THE RULES.
.....
DO YOU WANT SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT, BUT WHO WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS, OR...
...SOMEONE WHO WILL LOVE YOU RIGHT AWAY IF YOU SAY YES?
BE-SIDES ...
...YOU HAVE TO CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS.

WHICH ONE WOULD MAKE YOU...
...THE HAPPIEST?
バタン
RUUAN, YOU'RE SO COOL!!
LIKE THE WAY YOU MADE YOUR EXIT--SO PERFECT!
I COULDN'T GET A WORD IN...
WHAT AM I DOING ANYWAY?
YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT THAT...
...ONCE IN A WHILE.

THREE DAYS BEFORE VALENTINE'S DAY
MASTER TASUKE.
HMM?
DOESN'T IT SEEM LIKE THERE ARE LESS BOYS IN CLASS EVERYDAY?
I...I GUESS SO.
.....
THIS IS A PROBLEM.

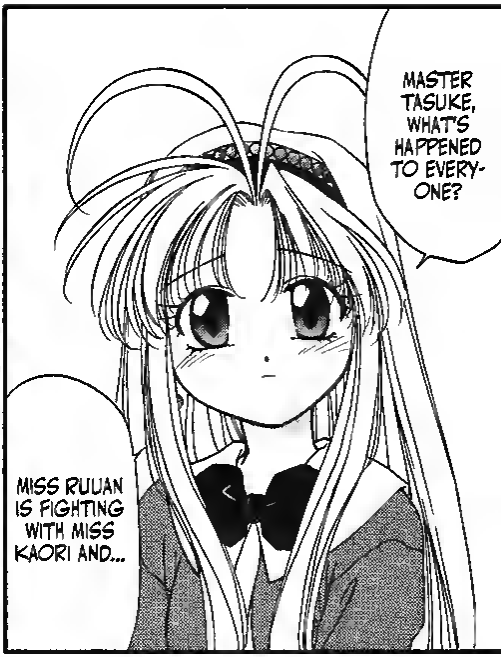
I...
...WILL WRITE THIS IN MY DIARY AND REMEMBER THIS FOREVER. ♡
13 YEARS OLD AND MY HEART IS POUNDING FOR MY FIRST LOVE.
THE ROOFTOP WHERE TASUKE ASKED ME TO MEET HIM...
I THINK I TOLD YOU THIS BEFORE, BUT...
...I LIKE SHAO.
SO...
.....
SO...WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TELL ME?
UH...UMM, YOU KNOW...

I KNOW.
HUH?
SO THAT'S WHY... UM, YOU KNOW... UMM...
BUT, TASUKE ...
YEAH?
WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE A GIRL WHO DOESN'T REVEAL HER EMOTIONS AT ALL, OR THE GIRL WHO GIVES YOU CHOCOLATES ON VALENTINE'S DAY?
WHAT?

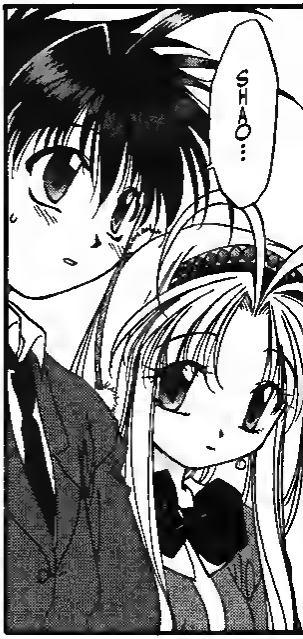
A PROACTIVE GIRL LIKE KAORI...
ISN'T THERE A CHANCE YOU'D PICK ONE LIKE THAT, TASUKE?
OH, CLASS IS STARTING!
SEE YOU LATER!
HMM... WHAT?
SAY SOMETHING BACK, ALREADY!!!
COME ON, ME...

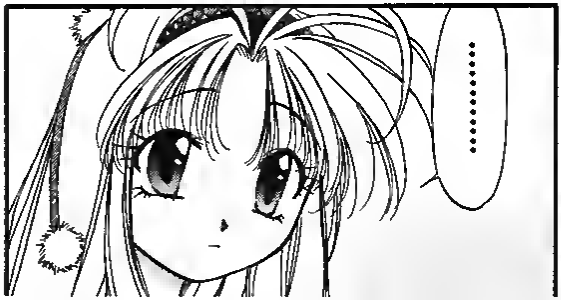
THE DAY BEFORE VALENTINE'S DAY
BY THE WAY, THIS IS AFTER SCHOOL.
BECAUSE OF YOUR DISGUSTING BROWN GLOBS...
...THERE ARE NO GUYS LEFT TO TASTE-TEST MY CHOCOLATE.
I THOUGHT IT WAS YOUR CREEPY, WIGGLY, LITTLE MOVING CANDIES THAT MADE THEM SICK, MISS RUUAN.
DON'T BLAME ME.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO IF I CAN'T PERFECT IT BY TOMORROW?!!
THAT'S WHAT I WAS GONNA SAY!!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO SCARE AWAY ALL MY TASTE-TESTERS, THEN YOU TRY THEM FOR ME, MISS RUUAN!!
ARGH! WHO'D EAT THAT STUFF?!!
.....

...ALL THE GIRLS ARE RESTLESS.
LET'S GO BUY OUR CHOCOLATES TODAY.
OH, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO SAY THAT TOO.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY IT LIKE THAT!!
EEEEK! KEEP THAT WIGGLY THING AWAY FROM ME!


MASTER TASUKE, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO EVERY-ONE?
MISS RUUAN IS FIGHTING WITH MISS KAORI AND...

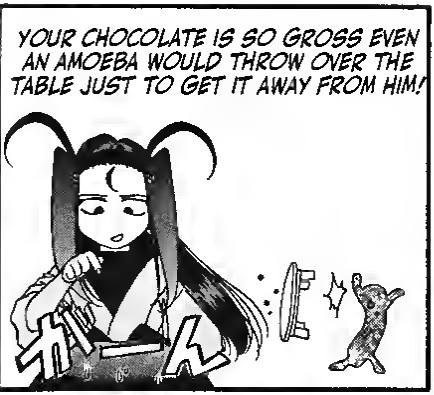
YOU AREN'T GETTING RESTLESS?


SHAO...


.....

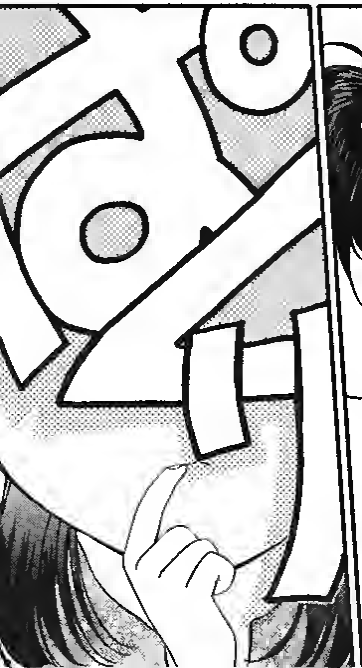
MASTER TASUKE, DO YOU KNOW WHY EVERYONE'S BEHAVING SO STRANGELY?
HUH?!!
IF I KNEW WHAT WAS GOING ON...
...DO YOU THINK I WOULD BE RESTLESS TOO?
.....
OH, RIGHT ...
IT'D MAKE ME HAPPY IF YOU WERE RESTLESS.
BUT... ...I'M NOT TELLING.

AARGH!!
I WANT TO TELL! I WANT TO TELL! I WANT TO TELL SHAO AND HAVE HER GET ALL RESTLESS!!
BUT WHAT IF SHE DOESN'T? AND BESIDES, IF I TELL HER, IT'S LIKE I'M ASKING FOR HER CHOCOLATES, ISN'T IT!!?!!
WHAAAT?
WHY?! THAT'S NOT FAIR! YOU'RE LEAVING ME OUT?!!
C'MON, LET'S GO HOME!!
SO, I GUESS THAT MEANS...
THIS YEAR, I WON'T GET ANY CHOCOLATE FROM SHAO.
SHUCKS!
MASTER TASUKE! WHY WON'T YOU TELL MEE?
AIHARA


YOUR CHOCOLATE IS SO GROSS EVEN AN AMOEBA WOULD THROW OVER THE TABLE JUST TO GET IT AWAY FROM HIM!

NO ONE WOULD DO THAT TO MY CHOCO-LATE!!

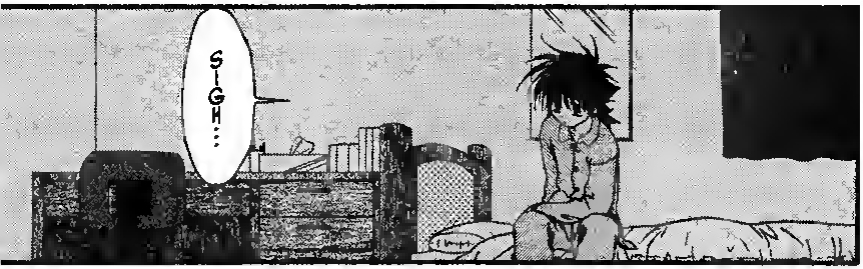
REALLY! MISS RUIAN, YOU'RE SO STUPID!!

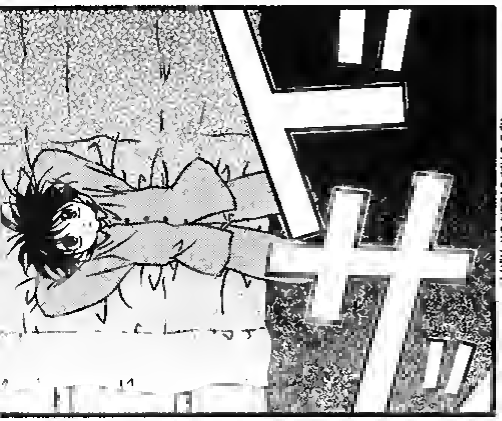


WHATEVER! I'LL JUST TASTE-TEST IT MYSELF!!
HOW CAN SHE SAY THAT?! MINE LOOKS PERFECTLY FINE!

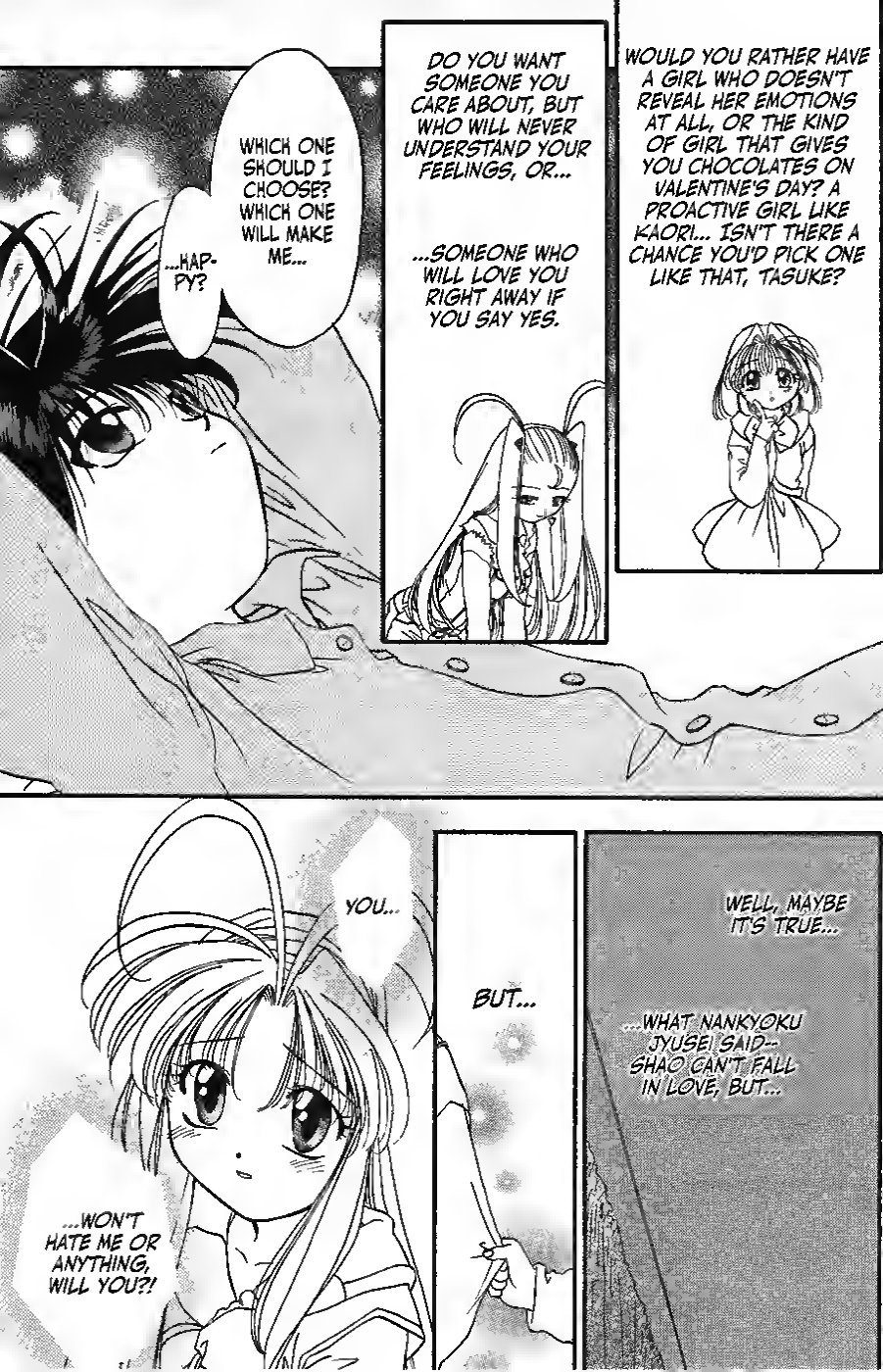
GRGH!
REALLY THAT GIRL GETS ON MY NERVES!!
IS THAT HOW YOU SPEAK TO YOUR TEACHER?!!
MISS RUUAN, YOUR CHOCOLATE IS SO DISGUSTING EVEN VOMIT THAT'S SETTLED AT THE BOTTOM OF A DIRTY RIVER WOULD FLEE FROM IT!
WRIGGLE WRIGGLE
うにょにょ
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, THEN FINE!!
I'LL JUST TASTE THEM MYSELF!!

OOH, WHO CARES, ANYWAY!! AT LEAST MINE'S EDIBLE!!


SIGH...



SO I WON'T GET ANY CHOCO-LATE FROM SHAO THIS YEAR AGAIN.
THAT'S STUCK ON THAT?


WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE A GIRL WHO DOESN'T REVEAL HER EMOTIONS AT ALL, OR THE KIND OF GIRL THAT GIVES YOU CHOCOLATES ON VALENTINE'S DAY? A PROACTIVE GIRL LIKE KAORI... ISN'T THERE A CHANCE YOU'D PICK ONE LIKE THAT, TASUKE?
DO YOU WANT SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT, BUT WHO WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS, OR...
...SOMEONE WHO WILL LOVE YOU RIGHT AWAY IF YOU SAY YES.
WHICH ONE SHOULD I CHOOSE? WHICH ONE WILL MAKE ME...
...HAP-PY?
WELL, MAYBE IT'S TRUE...
...WHAT NANKYOKU JYUSEI SAID-- SHAO CAN'T FALL IN LOVE, BUT...
BUT...
YOU...
...WON'T HATE ME OR ANYTHING, WILL YOU?!

WHEN I THINK ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT...
I WISH I COULD RETURN TO YOU RIGHT AWAY.
...I WANT TO BE WITH YOU...
...I CAN'T THINK IT'S...
...TOTALLY HOPELESS.

UGH.
...HOW I'M GOING TO MAKE MY ESCAPE ON VALENTINE'S DAY.
WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT IS...
SIGH...THAT'S SO FAR AWAY.
WELL, FOR NOW, I'LL JUST PUT IT OFF UNTIL NEXT YEAR.
VALENTINE'S DAY ♡
HEY, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE HIM THE CHOCOLATE?
!!
MISS RUAN, YOU FORGOT YOUR THINGS.
NNNNGH! MASTER TAA!
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?!

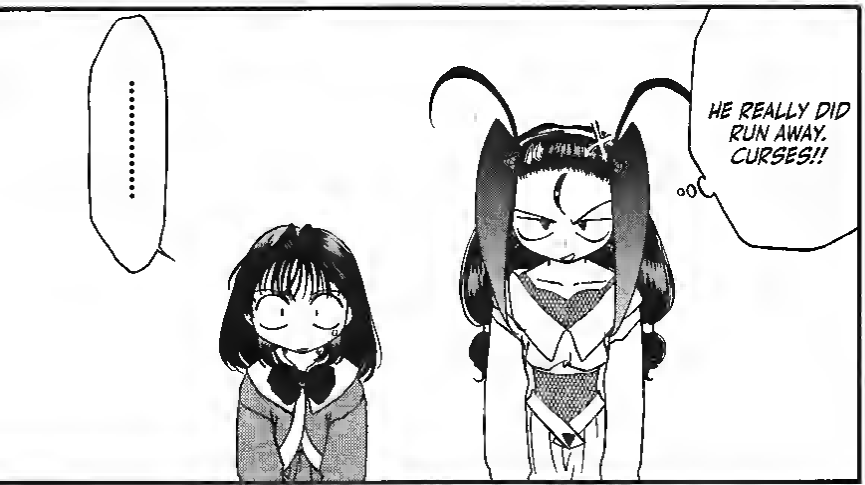
MISS RUUAN!! EVEN IF YOU GET TO TASUKE FIRST...
...I WON'T LET THINGS GO YOUR WAY!!
すん
スタ!!
スタ!!
HUMPH!
IF I WANTED TO BEAT YOU, THEN I WOULD'VE PASSED YOU A LONG TIME AGO!!
WE DO LIVE ON THE SAME STREET YOU KNOW.
ANYWAY, WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR FACE?
げっ
MY FACE?! WHAT'S UP WITH YOUR BANDAGES, MISS RUUAN?
SHUT UP ALREADY!! WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS THAT MASTER TAA RAN AWAY TO SCHOOL WHILE I WAS SLEEPING!
WHAT?!! THEN THAT MEANS WHOEVER GETS TO SCHOOL FIRST GETS TO GIVE TASUKE CHOCOLATE FIRST!!
MISS RUUAN!
WAIT!
COME BACK HERE, MISSY!!
YAY!!
はぴゅー
OOH, MISS RUUAAAAN!

GOOD MORNING, TASUKE! ♡
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, MASTER TAA. ♡
?
ちょいちょい
WHAT?!! WHERE'D HE GO?!
TASUKE'S NOT HERE.
くったり

Tasuke Shichiri will be absent today.

Please don't look for me.

- Tasuke



CHAPTER 37
VALENTINE PANIC (PART TWO)

Tasuke Shichiri will be absent today.

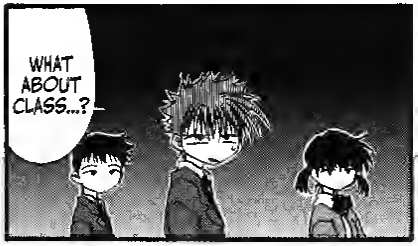
Please don't look for me.

- Tasuke

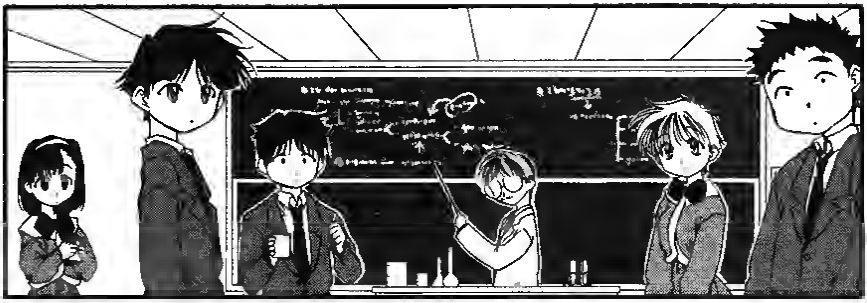
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE, MISSY!
YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOU CAN BEAT ME?!
YOU DON'T GIVE UP EASILY EITHER!!

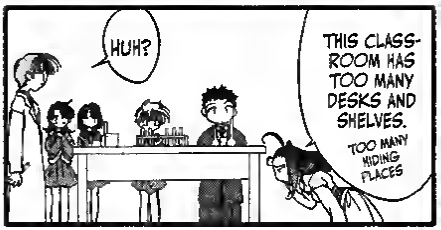
ドタドタドタ
YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME BEHIND!!

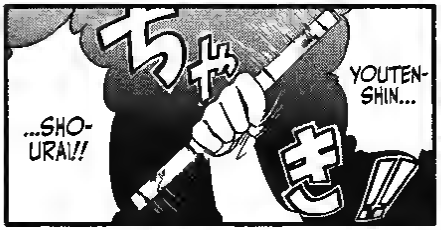
AH!
BRING IT ON, SISTER! BEGIN OPERATIONS!!
SLAM


WHAT ABOUT CLASS...?

TASUKE?
NOT HERE.
I DON'T THINK HE'D BE IN THERE.
TASUKEEE, WHEREARE YOU?
TEACHER, HAVE YOU SEEN TASUKE?
MISS AIHARA, CLASS IS STARTING.
WHO?
THERE ARE SOME THINGS MORE IMPORTANT TO A GIRL THAN CLASS!
PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE!
WHA...?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MISS AIHARA?!!
OH, TASUKE!!




HUH?
THIS CLASSROOM HAS TOO MANY DESKS AND SHELVES.
TOO MANY HIDING PLACES


...SHOURAI!!
YOUTENSHIN...

CAN I HELP YOU, MISS RUUAN?

UMPH!
SO HE'S NOT HERE EITHER.
NNGH. H-MISS RUUAN...

WHOOAA!!
AAAAAH!

MAYBE I SHOULD LOOK FOR HIM TOO.

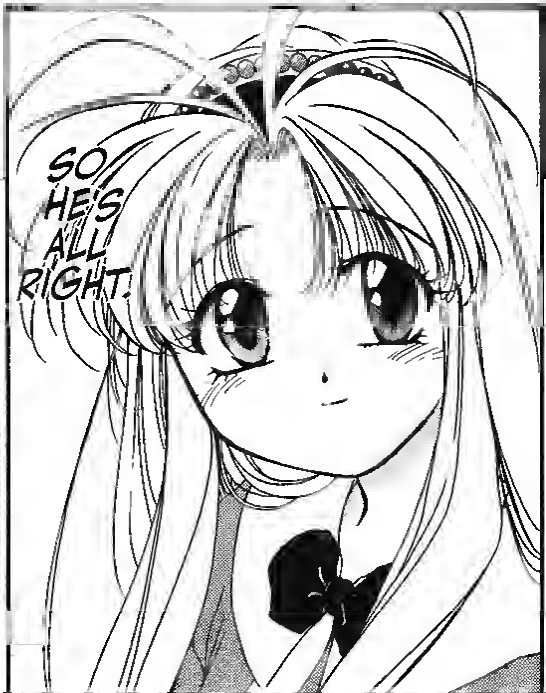
MASTER TASUKE.
?

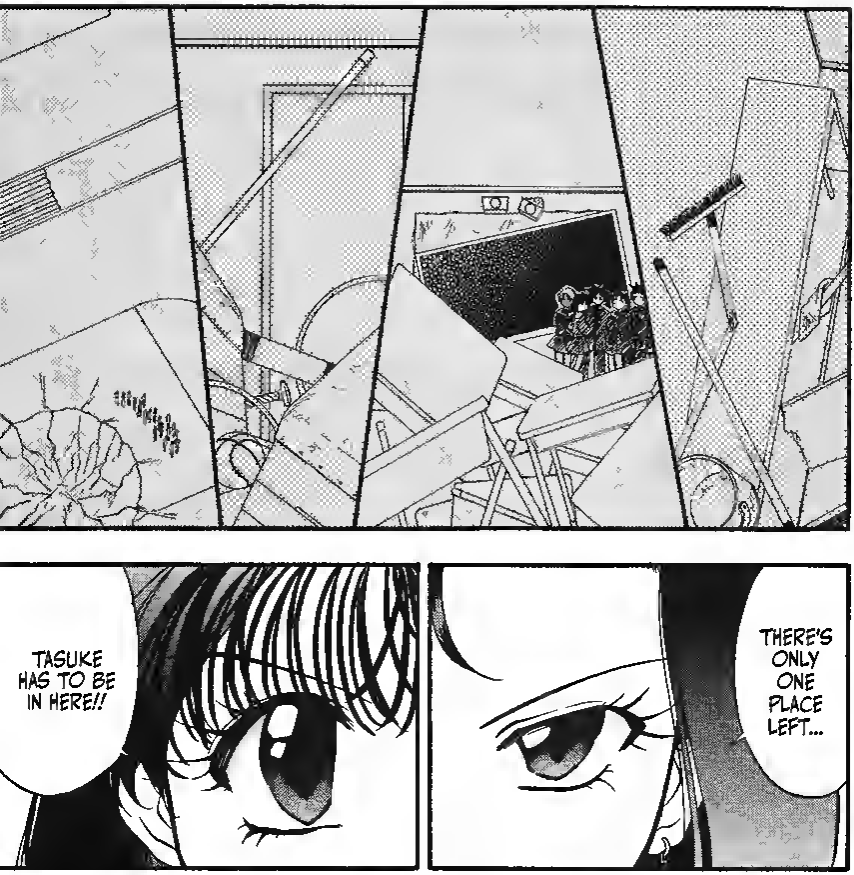
RISHU.

OOH.
WHAT AM I DOING, ANYWAY?
AM I STUPID OR SOMETHING?

COULD YOU...
...TELL SHAO WHERE I AM?
OKAY!!

BUT WHAT IS HE DOING OUT THERE?
HMM...
うーん


SO HE'S ALL RIGHT.


TASUKE HAS TO BE IN HERE!!
THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE LEFT...

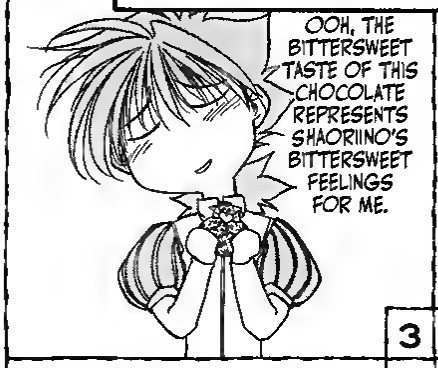
WHAT ARE YOU LADIES DOING HERE?
YOU...
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE
MASTER-
TA--
とぼ"
OH, KAORI... ARE YOU DONE WITH YOUR ERRAND. THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN CLASS?
ガタッ
...SHOULD BE IN CLASS RIGHT NOW!!

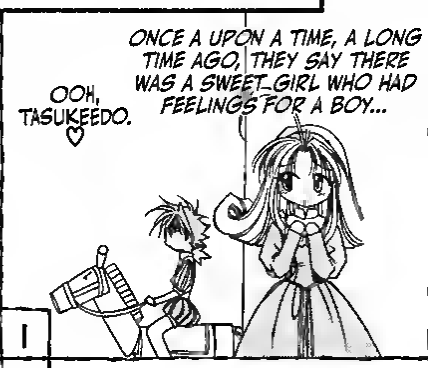
...THAT MEANS THE SEARCH RESUMES AFTER SCHOOL...OFF SCHOOLGROUNDS.
IF I LOOKED THIS HARD AND COULDN'T FIND HIM...
THAT GIRL'S NOT GOING TO CHEAT, IS SHE?
EXCUSE ME, MISS RULIAN-CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
UMM ...

.....?
HEY, KAORI, LET'S GO TO THE LADIES' ROOM TOGETHER.
OKAY. LET'S HANG OUT UNTIL RECESS IS OVER.
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, MISS RUUAN?
OH, BOTHER.
MISS SHO-UKO.
BE-CAUSE ...
SOMETHING HAPPEN?
WHY DO YOU LOOK SO TROU-BLED?
HMM? WHAT IS IT, SHAO?

SO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY THE GIRLS ARE SO RESTLESS.
YES! I REALLY DO!!
OH, SHAO'S SITTING IN MY SEAT!!
WHOA, LUCKY.
HMM... I SEE.
WELL, YOU KNOW...
...TODAY IS...
.....
...VAL...

SHOUKO'S "OH, THIS IS VALENTINE'S DAY."♡





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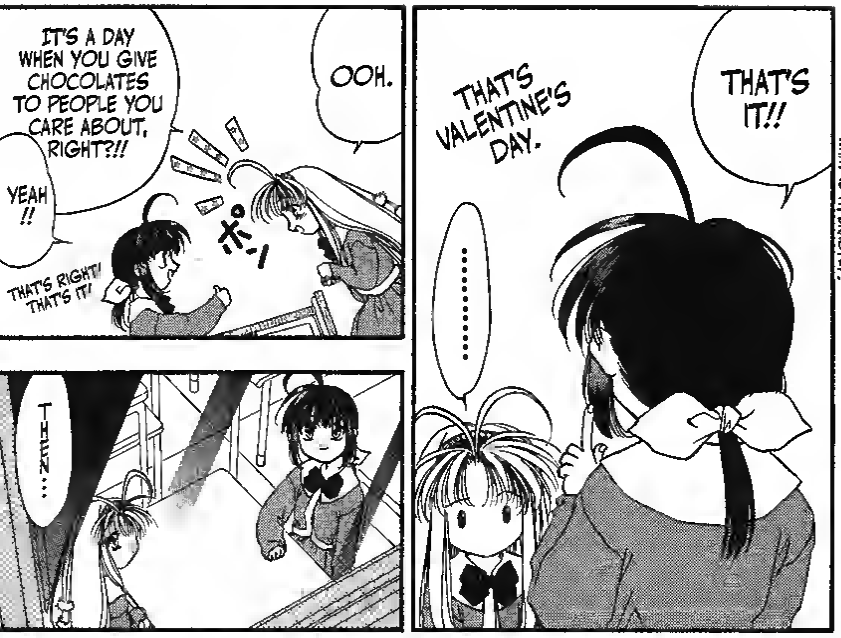
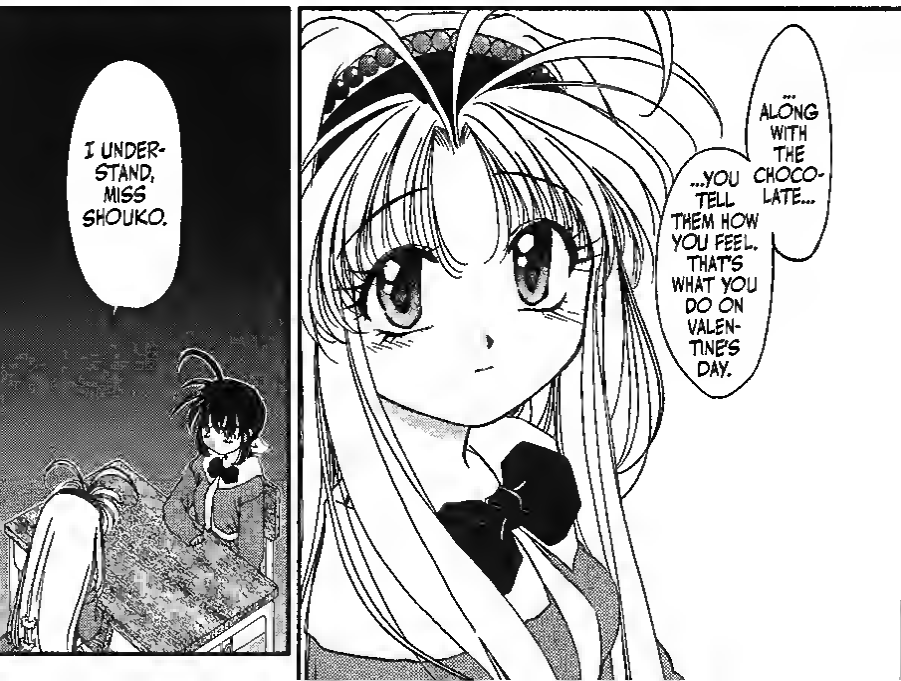
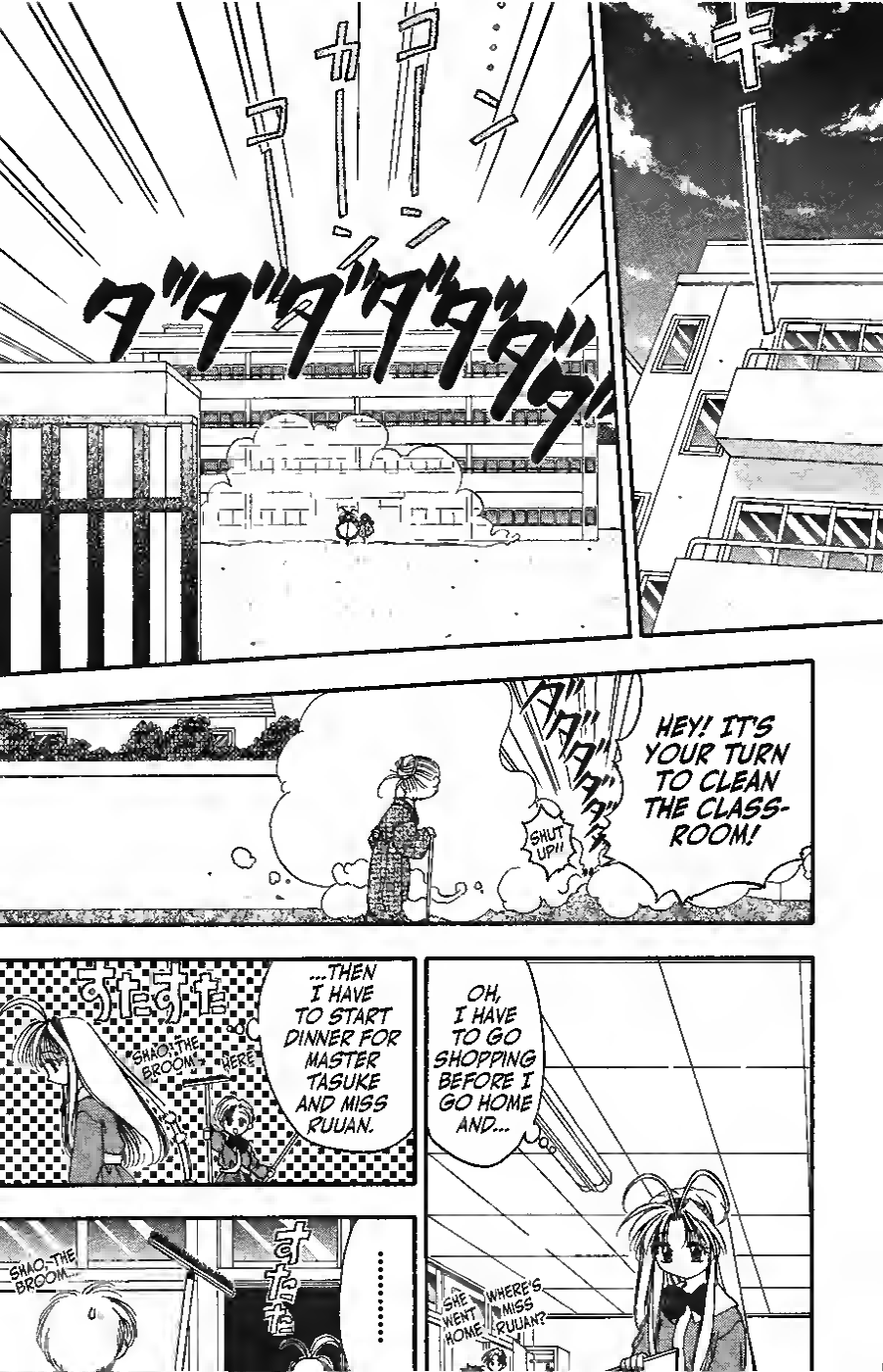
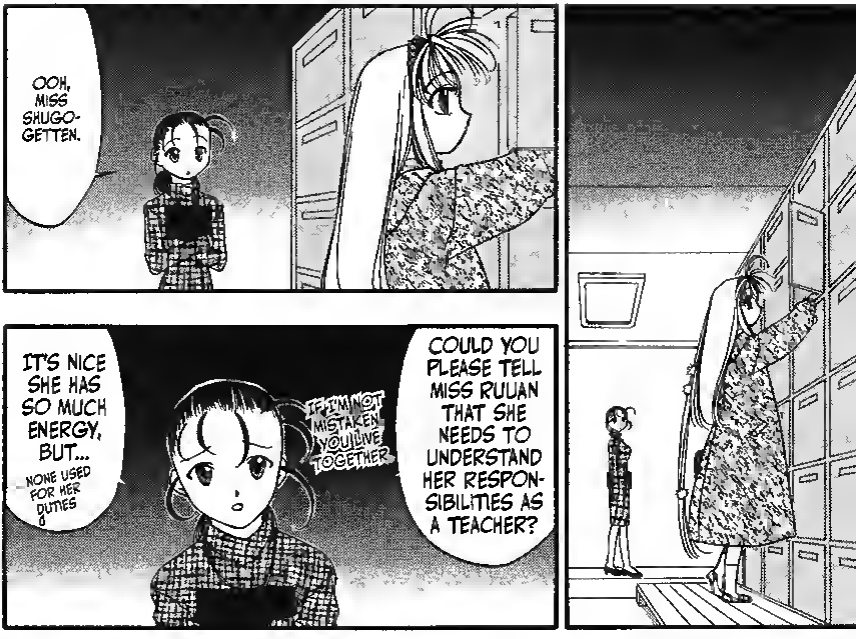

THAT'S IT!!
THAT'S VALENTINE'S DAY.
.....
OOH.
IT'S A DAY WHEN YOU GIVE CHOCOLATES TO PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT, RIGHT?!!
YEAH !!
THAT'S RIGHT! THAT'S IT!
ポン!
THEN...


...ALONG WITH THE CHOCOLATE...
...YOU TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL. THAT'S WHAT YOU DO ON VALENTINE'S DAY.
I UNDERSTAND, MISS SHOUKO.

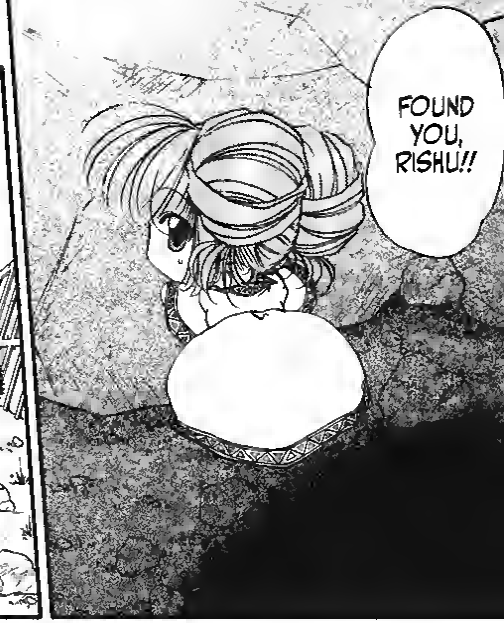
THEN I HAVE TO GIVE CHOCO-LATE TO...
...MASTER TASUKE, MISS SHOUKO, MISS RUUAN, MISS KAORI, MR. IZUMO, MR. TAKASHI, MR. KOUICHI--
SHAO.
YOU DIDN'T GET IT AT ALL!!
I...
I DON'T GIVE THEM CHOCO-LATE?
.....
YOU ONLY GIVE CHO-COLATE TO ONE PERSON...
JUST TO THE PERSON YOU WANT TO CONFESS YOUR SPECIAL FEELINGS TO.
NOT EVERY-ONE.


ダダダダダダ
HEY! IT'S YOUR TURN TO CLEAN THE CLASS-ROOM!
ダダダダ
SHUT UP!!
すたすた
SHAO, THE BROOM!
HERE
...THEN I HAVE TO START DINNER FOR MASTER TASUKE AND MISS RUUAN.
OH, I HAVE TO GO SHOPPING BEFORE I GO HOME AND...
すたすた
SHAO, THE BROOM...
WHERE'S MISS RUUAN?
SHE WENT HOME

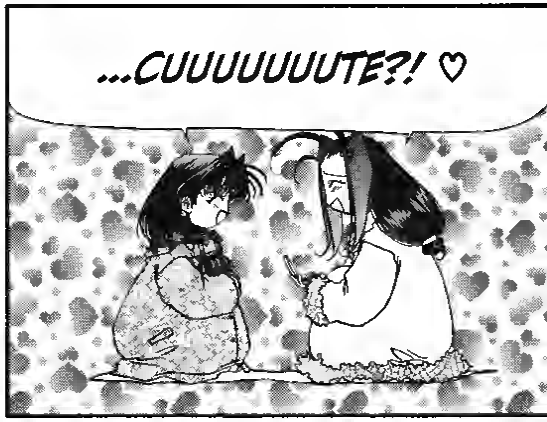
♩ APPARENTLY, THEY THINK THAT'S HER LAST NAME.


OOH, MISS SHUGO-GETTEN.
IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, YOU LIVE TOGETHER
COULD YOU PLEASE TELL MISS RUUAN THAT SHE NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND HER RESPONSIBILITIES AS A TEACHER?
IT'S NICE SHE HAS SO MUCH ENERGY, BUT...
NONE USED FOR HER DUTIES
M-MISS SHUGO-GETTEN!
YOU FORGOT YOUR SHOES!!
UMM, YOU KNOW, MISS SHUGO-GETTEN ...
OH

.....
KOTOU'S CANDY SHOP
RISHU?
HEEEY, RISHU.
WHERE ARE YOU?
RI--
OH...



HIDE AND SEEK, EH? dd



YOU!!
I CAME ALL THE WAY HOME TO GET MY COMPACT AND YOU J-J-JUST...
...SNUCK A PEEK!
EEEEK!♡
TASUKE-EEEE!!
Y-
YOU CHEATER!!
AM NOT!! THIS IS TOTALLY A STRATEGIC VICTORY!!
A DELICATE GIRL LIKE ME HAS TO USE WHATEVER TRICKS SHE CAN TO WIN. ♡
EEK! I'M SO SMART!

スイ
OVERSIZED GARBAGE BAG
MISSY ...
IF YOU TALK AND RUN AT THE SAME TIME...
...YOU'LL BITE YOUR TONGUE OFF!
I GUESS THAT MAKES TWO OF US!!
UGH.
MISS RUUAN!!
YOU'RE A SUPER-CHEATER!!
YOU'RE THE WORST.
カ!

HEY...!
I WON'T LET YOU WIN!!
LET GO OF ME, IDIOT GIRL!!
NO WAAAAY! YOU PER-VERTED OLD LADY!!
AS WE CAN SEE...
WHAAT?! WHAT DID YOU CALL ME?!!
PERVERTED OLD LAADY!!
...THE DEEPER THE FEELINGS OF THE GIRLS IN LOVE...
...THE MORE INTENSE THE BATTLES BETWEEN THEM.
AND...

...IN THE END...
...THE ONE WHO REACHED THEIR BELOVED TASUKE FIRST WAS...

HERE.
I WANT TO GIVE THIS TO YOU, MASTER TASUKE.
.....
WHAT... UMM...
SHAO... TH-THIS IS...!!
CHO-CHOCO...

SHE SAID IT'S A DAY WHEN ...
...YOU EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS FOR SOMEONE AND GIVE HIM CHOCOLATE.
Y-YEAH?
...THAT TODAY'S THE DAY CALLED "VALENTINE'S DAY."
MISS SHOUKO TAUGHT ME...
ヒソ
Y-YES!!
MASTER TASUKE.
SHA-SHA-SHA-SHAO'S...FEELINGS?!
SH...O...

WHAT...
...KIND OF FEEL-INGS DID SHE MEAN?
ドキッ
WHAT ARE THE FEELINGS YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO EXPRESS WHEN YOU DELIVER THE CHOCOLATE?
.....
IS IT WRONG TO HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE YOU WANT TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS TO?
YOU CAN ONLY TELL ONE? WHY IS IT ONLY ONE?
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU EXPRESS THEM?

I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT MISS SHOUKO TAUGHT ME AND...
...ABOUT MY FEELINGS...
BUT I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND HOW THIS WORKS.
BUT...
...EVER SINCE I BOUGHT THAT CHOCOLATE...
...I THINK I FEEL A LITTLE RESTLESS SOMEHOW.
UMM...
MASTER TASUKE...
...WOULD YOU PLEASE ACCEPT...
...THIS CHOCOLATE FROM ME?

EVEN THOUGH I STILL CAN'T...
...EXPRESS HOW I FEEL.
OF COURSE!

NNGH...
DRAT!
D-
ぜぇ
ぜぇ
ぜぇ
ぜぇ
NOT TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT, BUT WHY ARE YOU WEARING SLIPPERS?
VALEN-TINE'S DAY IS...
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO GOT IN MY WAY!!
IT'S BE-CAUSE YOU GOT IN MY WAY!!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!!
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!!

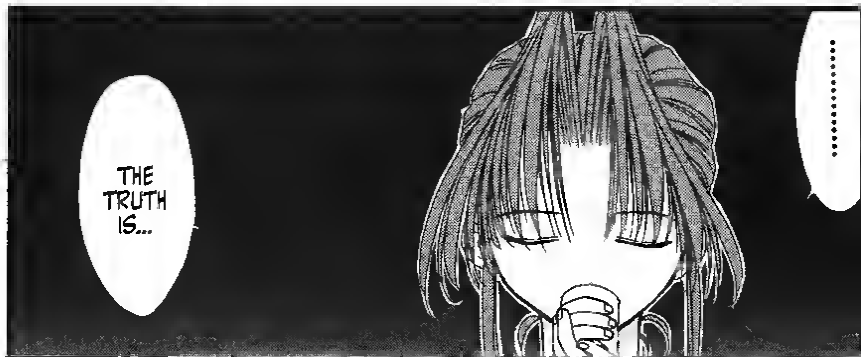
...A MAGICAL DAY ONCE A YEAR WHEN...
...WOMEN IN LOVE ARE GIVEN STRENGTH. ♡
HUMPH!
かぁ
かぁ
MASTER TAA AND I WILL BE TOGETHER LONG BEFORE THAT HAPPENS.
AFTER ALL, WE ARE LIVING TOGETHER.
WHATEVER. BY NEXT VALENTINE'S DAY WE'LL ALREADY BE LOVERS, SO IT'LL BE ONLY "NATURAL" FOR HIM TO ACCEPT MY CHOCOLATE!!

CHAPTER 38
RISHU AND IZUMO'S OPERATION: GET FRIENDLY...?!

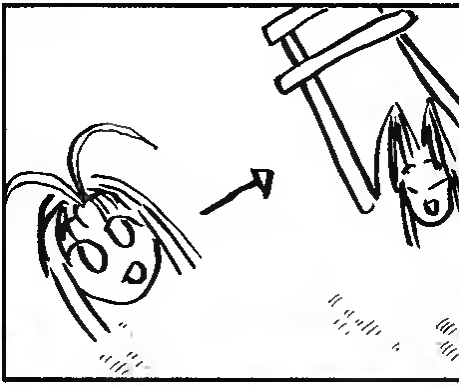
SHAO.
OOH...
THE MORNING SUN IS SO BRIGHT.
I CAN NO LONGER...
ON DAYS LIKE THIS...
...I REMEMBER HOW YOUR SMILE IS EVEN BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN.
...HOLD BACK...
...THESE FEELINGS
I MUST TELL YOU HOW I FEEL.

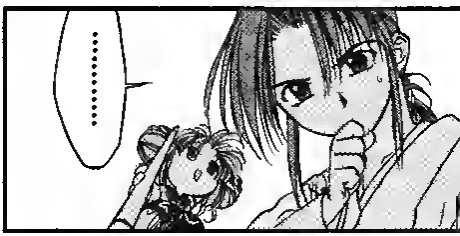
I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU BY CALLING YOU HERE...
...RISHU.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, THERE IS SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU.
OH. PLEASE...
...HELP YOURSELF TO SOME OF MY MOTHER'S SPECIAL USUKAWA MANJYUU.*

* THIN-SKINNED BEAN CAKES



うんしょ うんしょ
UH... UMM ...
RISHU, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
DO YOU UNDER-STAND?
SO ...
... THAT'S HOW IT IS.
I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY, BUT... I DON'T THINK...
...YOU QUITE GOT IT.
THIS HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH KENDO.
.....
RIGHT?
UMM... RISHU?
CAN I GET YOU SOME PAPER?
PLEASE NOT THERE.
HM, THAT'S NOT RIGHT?





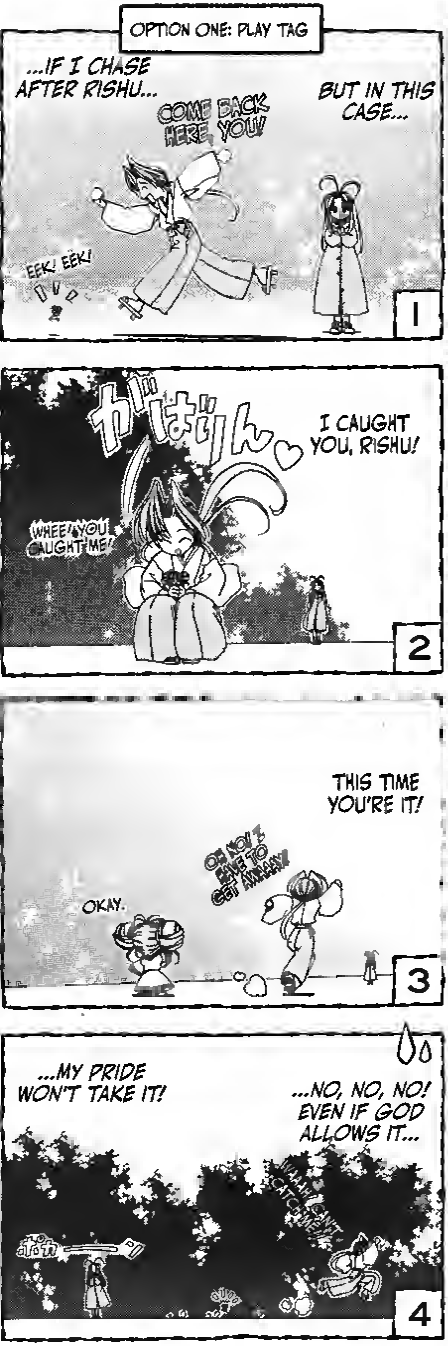
HAD TO THINK HARD, DIDN'T YOU, IZUMO?

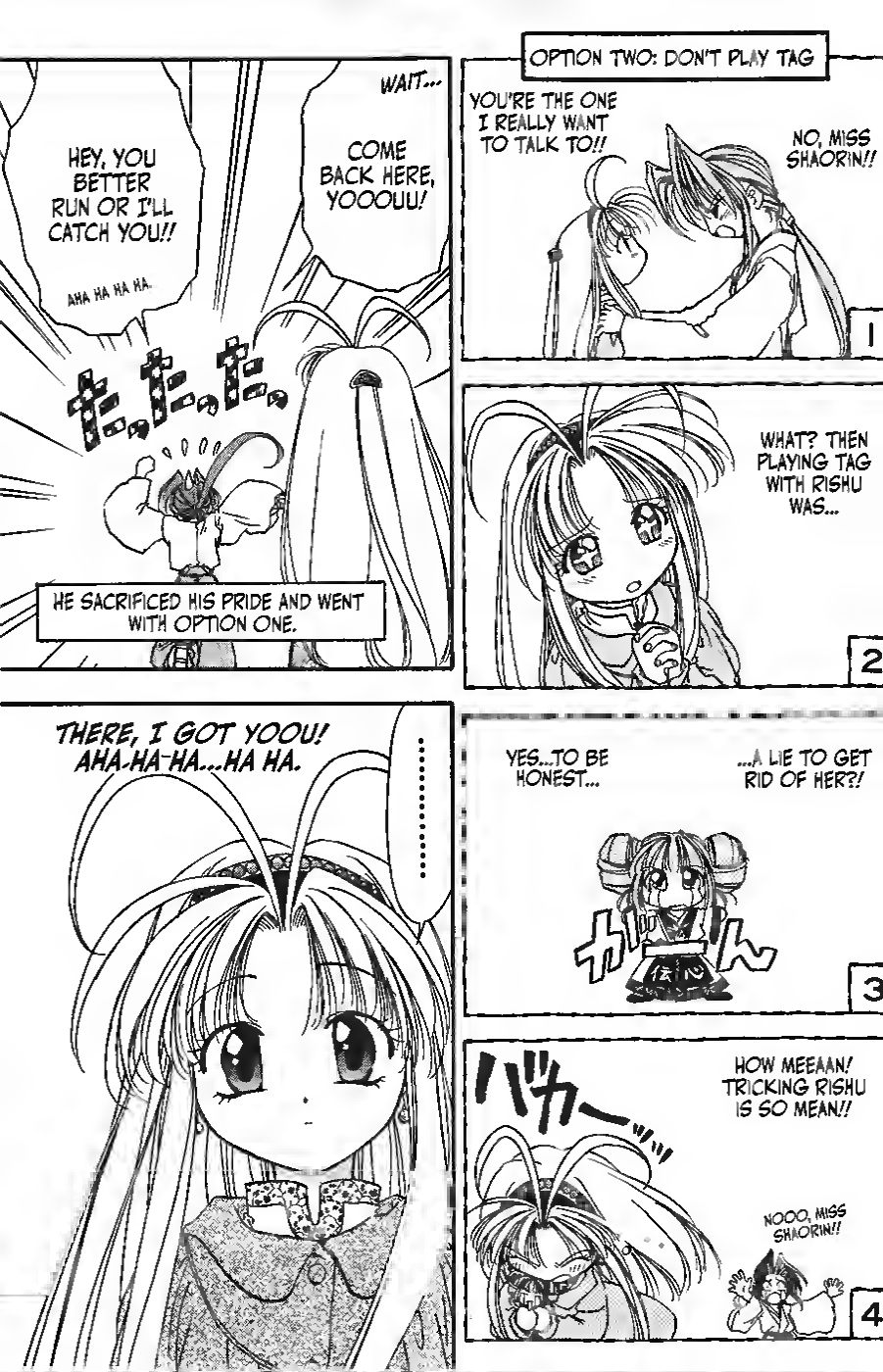
I'M SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, MR. IZUMO.
はあ
はあ
RISHU...
...SENT ME A MESSAGE THAT YOU WANTED ME TO COME.
I APOLOGIZE FOR CALLING YOU OVER SO SUDDENLY.
YOUR BEAUTY IS SO BLINDING.
ふふふ
IT HURTS MY EYES TO LOOK AT YOU.
OH NO.
OH...
MISS SHAORIN.

YES?!
MISS SHAO-RIN!!
AND...
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH... I...
ABOUT YOU...I...
YES?

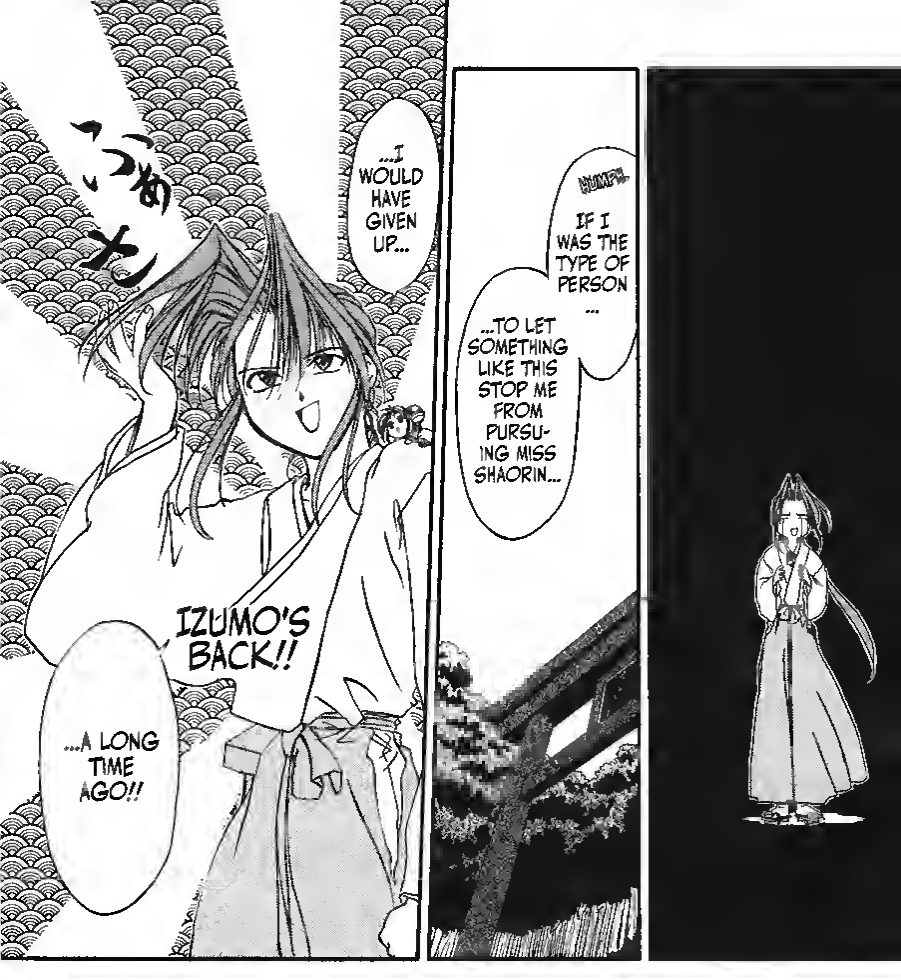
.....
MISS SHAO-RIN.
SIGH...I CAN'T BELIEVE I'VE STARTED DAYDREAMING
WHY IS SHE TAKING SO LONG?
ACTUALLY, NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
...THERE'S NO REASON FOR RISHU TO BE HERE ANYMORE SINCE SHE ALREADY CALLED SHAO.
SHE'LL JUST BE IN THE WAY.
COME ON, RISHU.

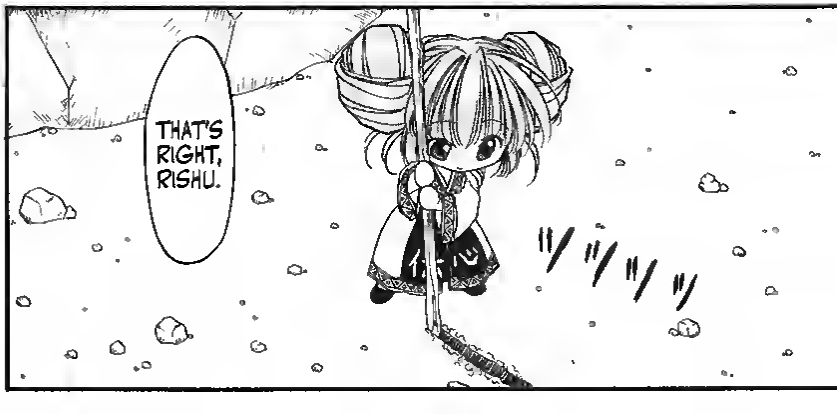
OH MY...
YOU TWO ARE PLAYING TAG?
LET'S PLAY TAG!
I'LL BE IT, SO YOU GO HIDE!
OKAY... THAT OUGHTTA TAKE CARE OF HER FOR A WHILE...
ぴょん
YAY!
TAG! ♡
MR. IZUMO, RISHU IS GETTING AWAY.
WHAT?!!
DON'T YOU HAVE TO CHASE AFTER HER?
...MUST SEEM SO PATHETIC.
PLAYING GAMES AT MY AGE...
TAG WITH A TINY GIRL.
CLANG CLANG
てくてく


OPTION ONE: PLAY TAG
...IF I CHASE AFTER RISHU...
COME BACK HERE, YOU!
EEK! EEK!
BUT IN THIS CASE...
1
I CAUGHT YOU, RISHU!
WHEE! YOU CAUGHT ME!
2
THIS TIME YOU'RE IT!
OH NO! I HAVE TO GET AWAY!!
OKAY.
3
...MY PRIDE WON'T TAKE IT!
...NO, NO, NO! EVEN IF GOD ALLOWS IT...
I WON'T LET YOU CATCH ME!!
4
THIS COULD BE A CRUCIAL DECISION!!
NO... UMM!!


OPTION TWO: DON'T PLAY TAG
YOU'RE THE ONE I REALLY WANT TO TALK TO!!
NO, MISS SHAORIN!!
1
WHAT? THEN PLAYING TAG WITH RISHU WAS...
2
YES...TO BE HONEST...
...A LIE TO GET RID OF HER?!
3
HOW MEEAAN! TRICKING RISHU IS SO MEAN!!
NOOO, MISS SHAORIN!!
4
WAIT...
COME BACK HERE, YOOOUU!
HEY, YOU BETTER RUN OR I'LL CATCH YOU!!
AHA HA HA HA.
HE SACRIFICED HIS PRIDE AND WENT WITH OPTION ONE.
THERE, I GOT YOOU! AHA-HA-HA...HA HA.

HOW SWEET! RISHU, YOU CALLED ME OVER SO YOU COULD SHOW THAT OFF, DIDN'T YOU?
MR. IZUMO, YOU AND RISHU...
...MUST BE REALLY GOOD FRIENDS. ♡
I STILL HAVE LAUNDRY TO DO, SO I HAVE TO GET BACK.
MR. IZUMO, PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF RISHU!
RISHU, DON'T CAUSE HIM ANY TROUBLE, OKAY?!!
YOU'RE SO SILLY.
...


...I WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP...
IZUMO'S BACK!!
...A LONG TIME AGO!!
HUMPH...
IF I WAS THE TYPE OF PERSON ...
...TO LET SOMETHING LIKE THIS STOP ME FROM PURSU-ING MISS SHAORIN...


THAT'S RIGHT, RISHU.

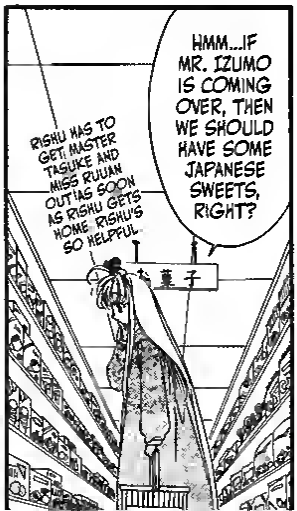
WELL THEN, LET'S GET STARTED ...
...ON GETTING TASUKE AND MISS RUUAN OUT OF THE SHICHIRI HOUSE. NO, I'LL REVISE THAT...
THAT'S HOW IT IS!!
I'M SO GLAD YOU UNDERSTAND.
OH, RISHU.
WELCOME HOME.
LADY SHAO!
LET'S KICK...
...THEM OUT.
I'M HOME!

IT SHOULD BE...
...ABOUT TIME, RIGHT, RISHU?
チッ
チッ
チッ
チッ
チッ
ピンポーン
ギィィィ
YES?
OKAY, THE BANGS ARE BANGIN'

TA...
!!
TA-TA-TA-TA...
TASUKE...?
WELLLL, PERFECT TIMING.
WHAT?!!
AS SOON AS SHAO LEFT WITH RISHU...
DARLING!
OH, MASTER TAI!
...I'VE BEEN IN A BIND HERE WITH RUUAN.
YEAH, SHE'S GOT ME BEAT BEAT!
WHY DON'T YOU COME IN AND HAVE SOME TEA OR SOMETHING?

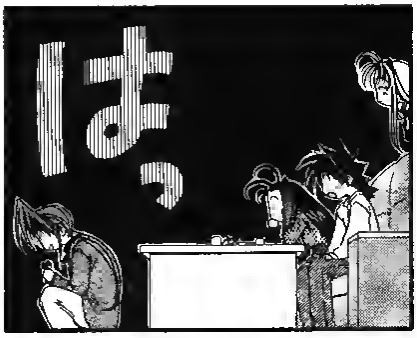
THANKS, IZUPII. ♡
HMM...
WOULD YOU PLEASE STOP CALLING ME "IZUPII"?

S—I—G—H.
THIS USUKAWA MANJYUU IS SO DELI-CIOUS!!


HMM...IF MR. IZUMO IS COMING OVER, THEN WE SHOULD HAVE SOME JAPANESE SWEETS, RIGHT?
RISHU HAS TO GET MASTER TASUKE AND MISS RUIJAN OUT! AS SOON AS RISHU GETS HOME, RISHU'S SO HELPFUL.
菓子

RISHU! WHAT...
...IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!

I'M HOME.
OH, MR. IZUMO.
YOU'RE HERE ALREADY.
RISHU!!
WHAT ABOUT RISHU?
HELLO! I'M SORRY WE'RE LATE.
YEAH... LATE...
I'LL TAKE THEM OUT NOW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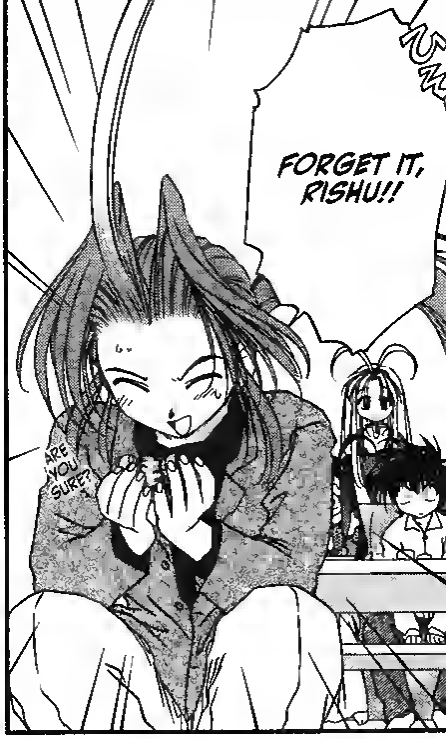
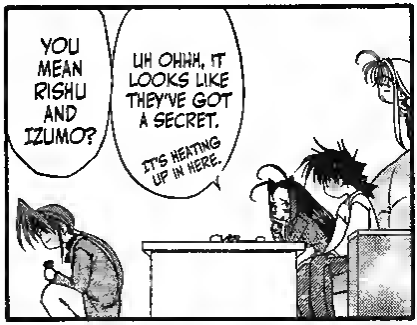

FORGET IT, RISHU!!
ARE YOU SURE?

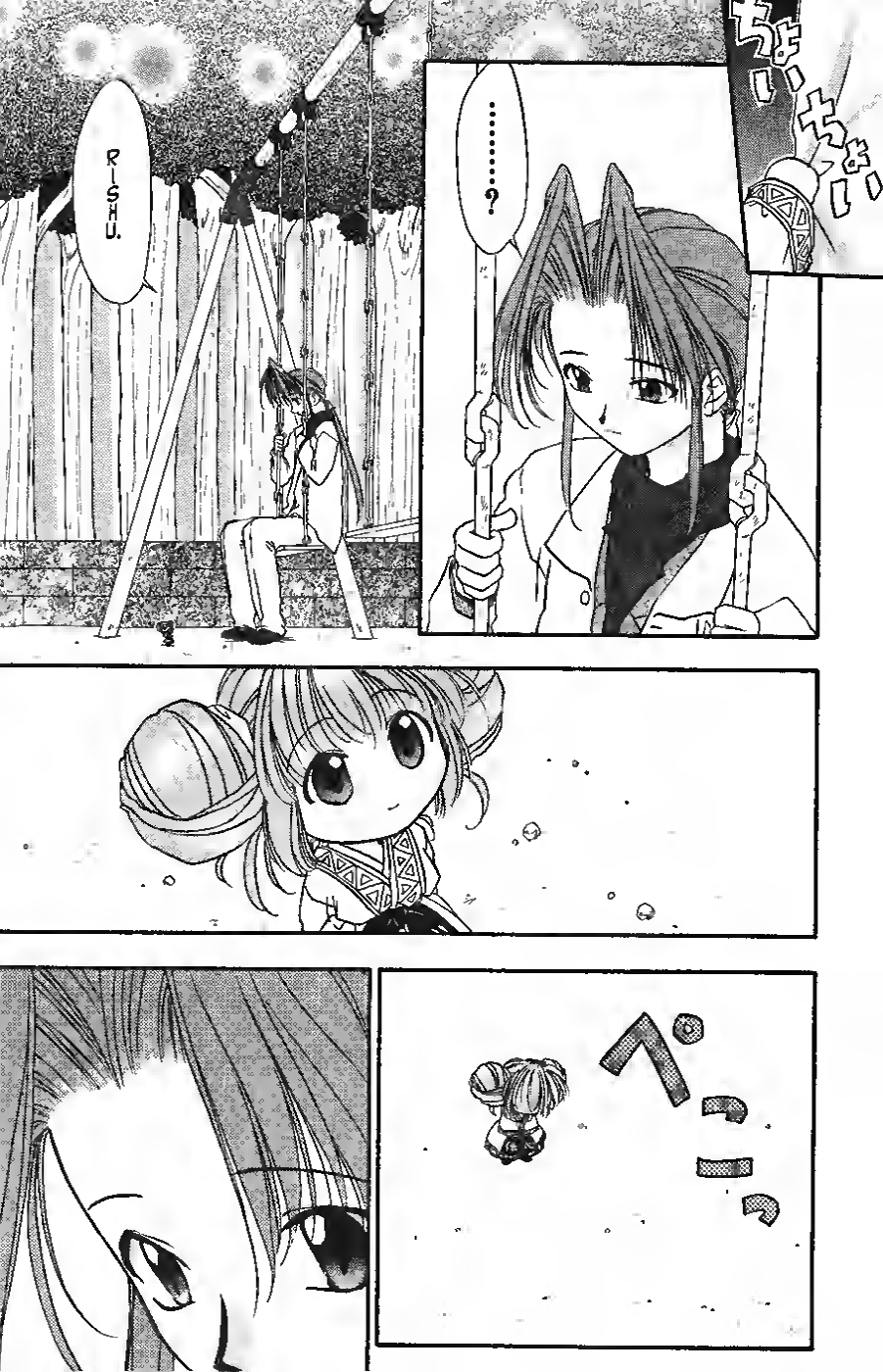

YOU MEAN RISHU AND IZUMO?
UH OHHH, IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE GOT A SECRET.
IT'S HEATING UP IN HERE.

THAT'S RIGHT, MASTER TASUKE!

...YOU GUYS WERE THAT CLOSE.
I HAD NO IDEA!
HUH? I DIDN'T KNOW...

WHAT ?!!!
THEY'RE REALLY GOOD FRIENDS.
THEY WERE...
...PLAY-ING TAG TOGE-THER!
TAG!
YOU KNOW!
T--
T--

....SUCH CLOSE FRIENDS...
...AREN'T THEY?
♡
MR. IZUMO AND RISHU ARE...
TAG!!
TAG...
† WEREN'T YOU PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK TOO, TASUKE?
SIGH.
THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR!!

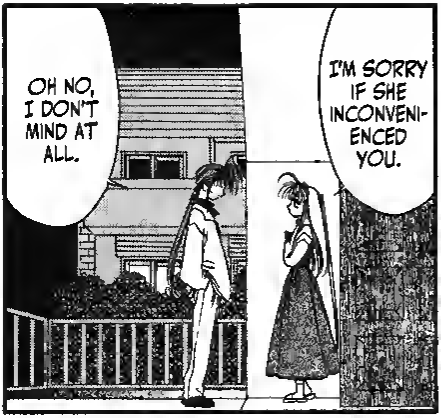

RISHU.
……？
ちょいちょい
ぺーっ

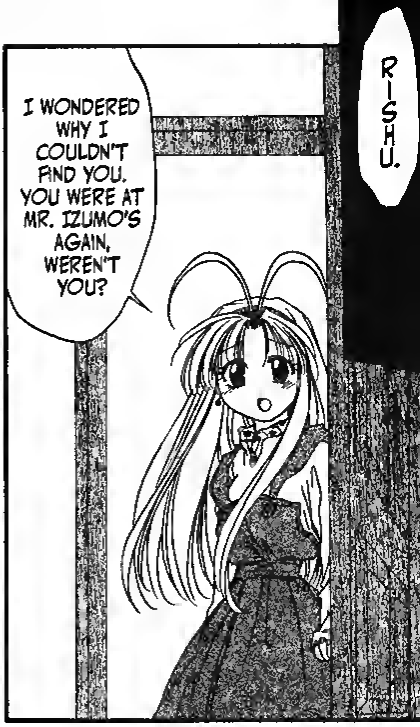
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
MR...
...IZUMO...
RISHU...
...CAN'T SPEAK, SO...
...RISHU CAN'T REALLY EXPRESS ...
...THIS FEELING WELL, BUT...

...I'VE EVER...
...HAD.
... TODAY WAS REALLY...
...THE MOST FUN...
RISHU IS A HOSHI-GAMI, SO...
...RISHU HAS DUTIES.

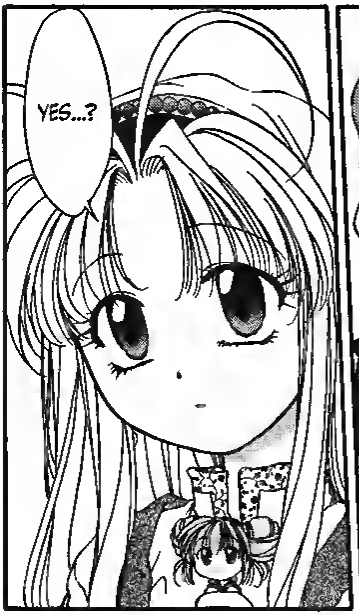
...ALL DAY.
THAT'S WHY...
UNTIL TODAY ...
...NO ONE HAS EVER PLAYED WITH ME...
.....
THAT'S WHY I'M REALLY...
...REALLY HAPPY.

...RISHU?
SHALL WE GO HOME...
...MISS SHAORIN WILL WORRY.
IF IT GETS TOO LATE...
REALLY, IT WASN'T LIKE I...
...WAS PLAYING WITH HER OR ANYTHING.


I'M SORRY IF SHE INCONVENI-ENCED YOU.
OH NO, I DON'T MIND AT ALL.


RISHU.
I WONDERED WHY I COULDN'T FIND YOU. YOU WERE AT MR. IZUMO'S AGAIN, WEREN'T YOU?

DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU. BE AN ADULT. AN ADULT.
PBBT
TAG

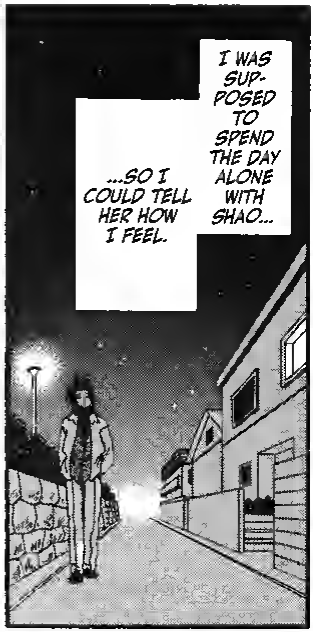

YES...?

OH, NOT TO CHANGE THE SUB-JECT, BUT, MISS SHAO-RIN...
THERE WAS SOME-THING I WANTED TO ASK YOU.

HOW RISHU...
...COMMUNICATES?
YES.
CAN YOU HEAR HER SOMETIMES?
WELL, IT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT.
ROBBLY...
HER ABILITY...
...IS COMMUNICATION, AFTER ALL.
...IF SHE HAD A FEELING SHE REALLY WANTED TO EXPRESS, THEN...
...YOU MIGHT UNDERSTAND IT.

IS THAT...
MR. IZUMO.
...SO?
DID YOU UNDER-STAND RISHU'S FEEL-INGS?
THAT MEANS THAT WAS RISHU'S VOICE AFTER ALL...
PLEASE TAKE CARE ON YOUR WAY HOME!
THANK YOU...
...SO MUCH ...
...FOR TODAY. ♡

EH...
...I SPENT THE DAY MAKING RISHU HAPPY.
IN-STEAD ...

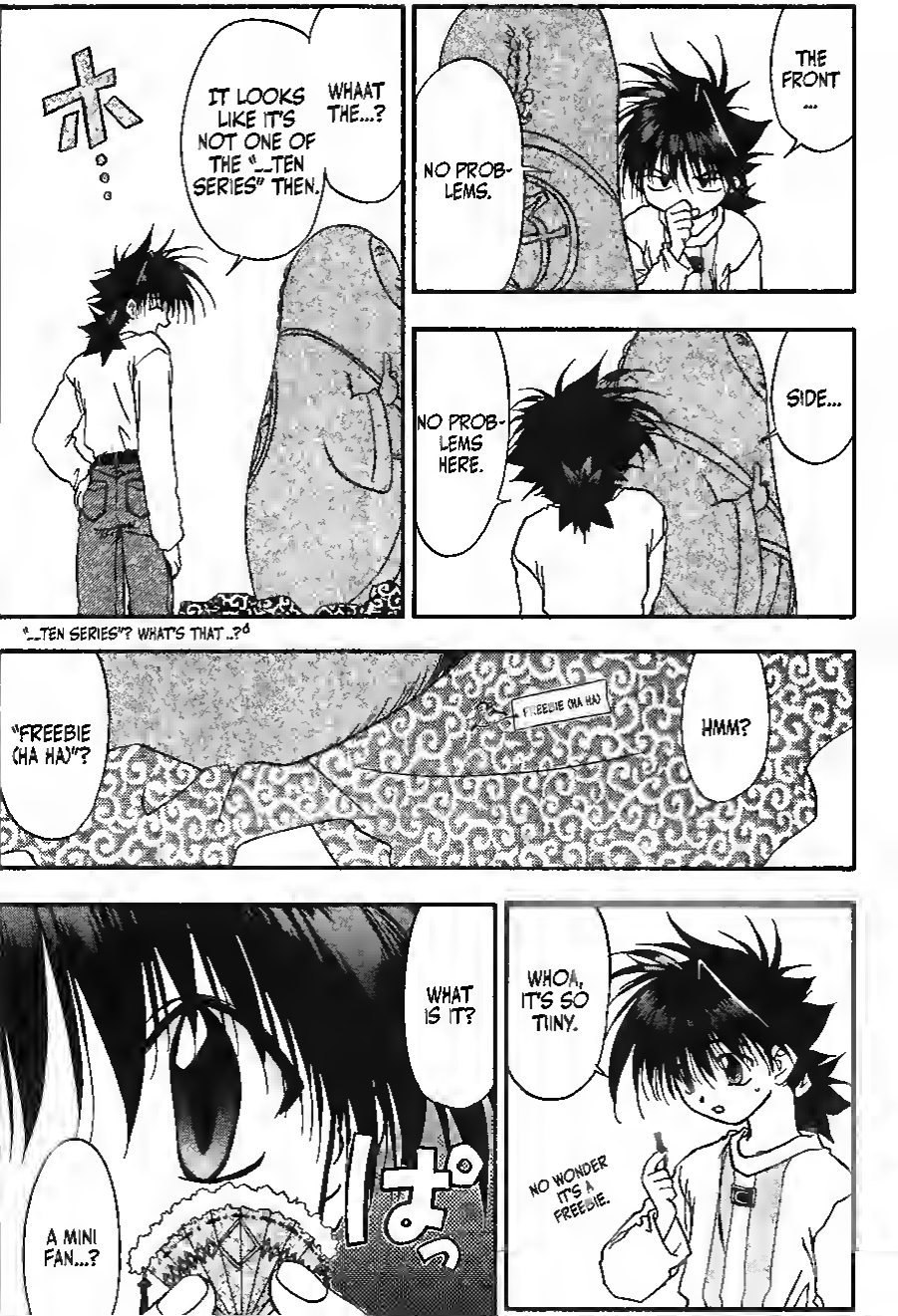

I WAS SUP-POSED TO SPEND THE DAY ALONE WITH SHAO...
...SO I COULD TELL HER HOW I FEEL.

OH WELL...
I THINK THAT WAS GOOD FOR TODAY.
AND I REALIZED THAT RISHU KIND OF TALKS LIKE A BABY.

THANK YOU.
HEARTFELT HOME DELIVERY
DELIVERY SERVICE
MR. SHICHIRI!
YOU'VE GOT MAAIL!
ハッ!!
ドオオオオオ
WOW, IT'S HUGE.
ちぃ。
WHO'S IT FROM?
ACK!!
N-NOT ANOTHER ONE!!
YOOO!
TASUKE.

CHAPTER 39
HERE COMES THE BANNAN CHITEN! (PART ONE)

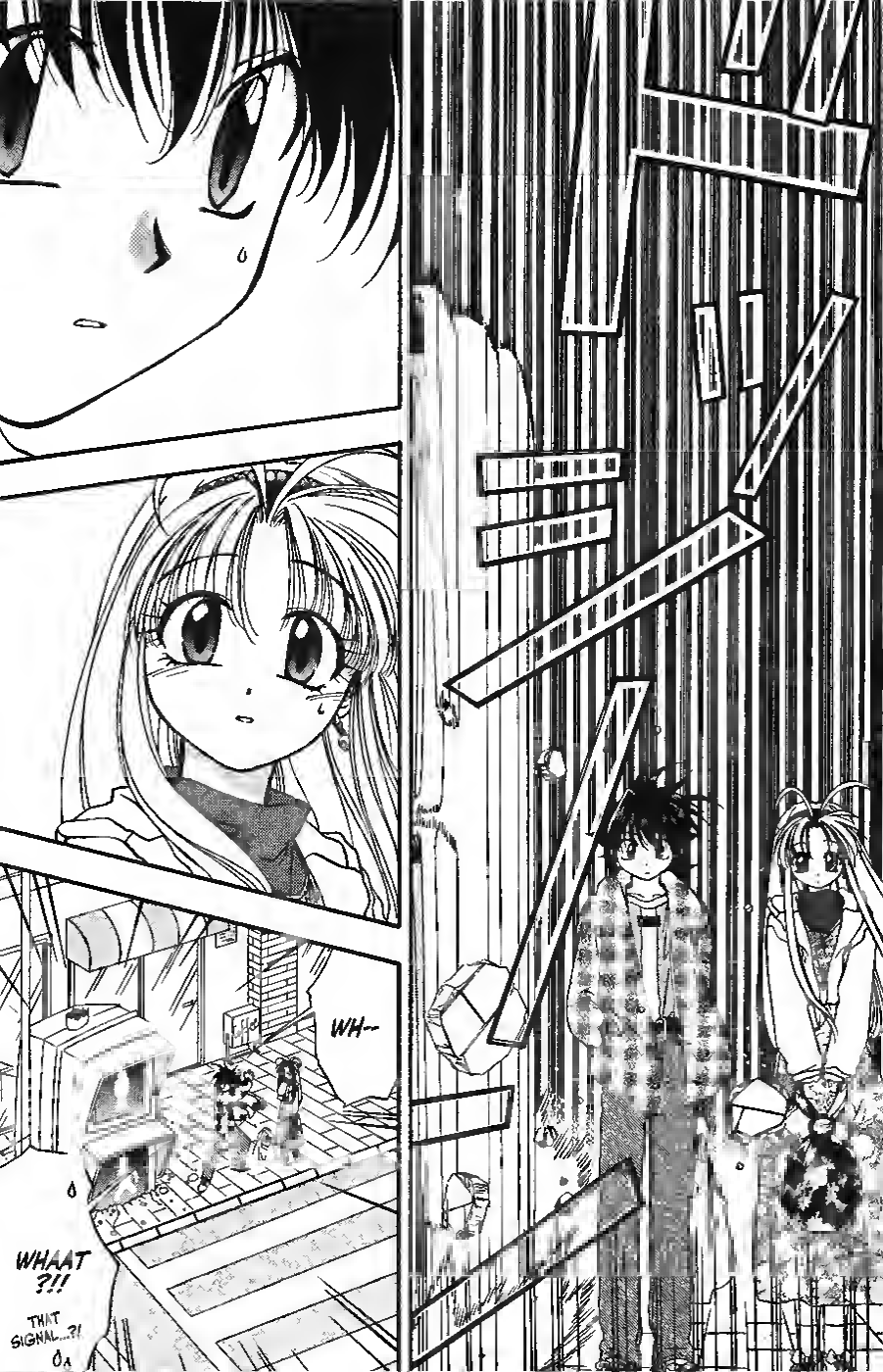
"NIHAO, TASUKE!!"
HE'S STILL IN CHINA...
OH.
I DON'T FEEL LIKE READING THIS RIGHT NOW.
CHINA
YOU'D THINK HE WAS THE KID...
I WAS RACING THE LOCAL KIDS TO SEE WHO WAS THE FASTEST AND THEN FROM THE OTHER DIRECTION CAME AN ARTIST!! OR SOME OLD GUY WHO LOOKED LIKE AN ARTIST.
HIS NAME WAS CH? AND AGAIN THIS
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH ALL THE WEIRD STUFF HE SENDS ME?
GIVE ME A BREAK!!
WELL, I BETTER HANDLE IT CAREFULLY OR SOMETHING WEIRD MIGHT POP OUT.
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT COULD BE HIDING IN THERE.
そそそ...
THIS SON SEEMS TO ACT MORE LIKE THE FATHER


THE FRONT...
NO PROBLEMS.
SIDE...
NO PROBLEMS HERE.
WHAAT THE...?
IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S NOT ONE OF THE "_TEN SERIES" THEN.
"_TEN SERIES"? WHAT'S THAT..?
HMM?
FREEBIE (HA HA)
"FREEBIE (HA HA)"?
WHOA, IT'S SO TINY.
NO WONDER IT'S A FREEBIE.
WHAT IS IT?
A MINI FAN...?

MASTER TASUKE!
WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO SHOPPING WITH ME?
OH!
YEAH!!
IF IT'S WITH YOU
WHAT ARE WE SHOPPING FOR?
LIMA, EGGS, CABBAGE AND...
ワアアア
FREEBIE CHA HA!

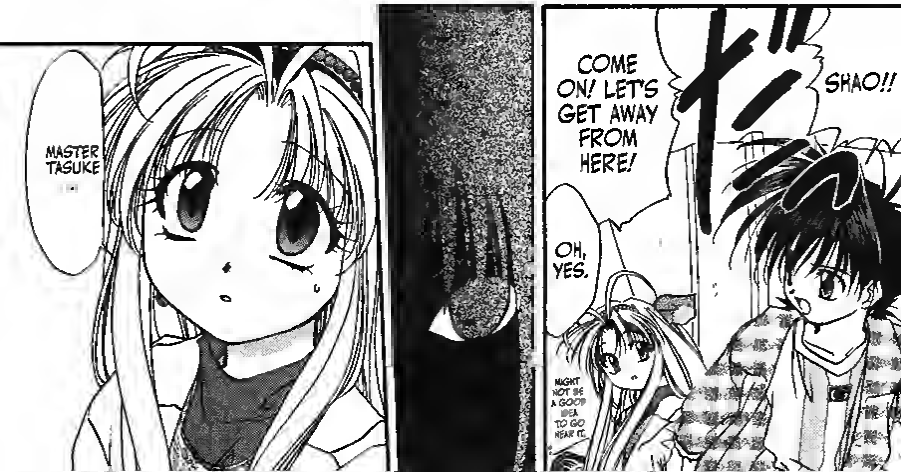
とぼー
HEEE...
SHAORIIIN, ARE YOU HERE?
ガチャッ
MUMBLE MUMBLE
ぬぼー
I'M STARVING.
RUIJAN OVERSLEPT.
...Y.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!
WH-WH-WH-WHAT...?
WHA...?

SIGH.
I SEE.
I CAN HANDLE IT. I AM A GUY AFTER ALL.
I'M FINE.
MASTER TASUKE ...
...AREN'T THOSE HEAVY?
GOING SHOPPING TOGETHER IS ALMOST LIKE BEING A H-HUSBAND AND W-W-WIFE...KINDA...
I SEE.
AFTER ALL, MASTER TASUKE IS A GUY.
IDIOT

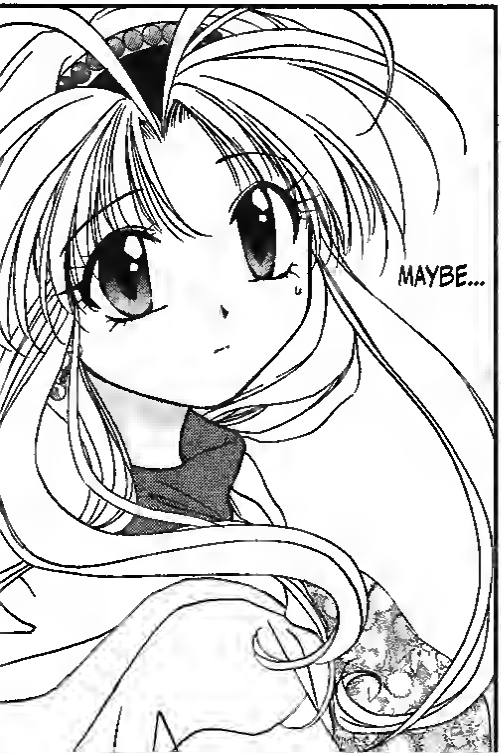

WH--
WHAAT ?!!
THAT SIGNAL...?!

BUT...
...THIS TOTALLY ISN'T HER STYLE OF ATTACK...
RUUAN, IS THAT YOU?!
RU...

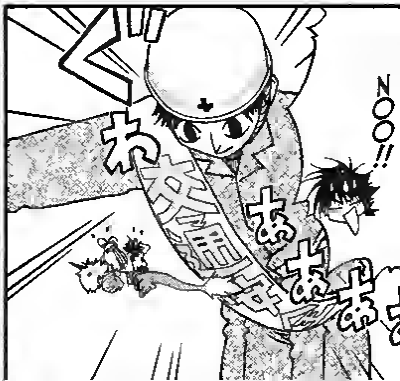
THIS ISN'T GOOD.
IT'S MAKING A SCENE.
DID YOU SEE THAT? THE STOPLIGHT JUST SPROUTED UP!
RUUAN OR NOT, SOMETHING WEIRD'S GOING ON!


MASTER TASUKE
COME ON! LET'S GET AWAY FROM HERE!
SHAO!!
OH, YES.
MIGHT NOT BE A GOOD IDEA TO GO NEAR IT.

WHA...?
WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON?
WOOF
WOOF
HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET UP THESE STAIRS?
THEY'RE ENORMOUS.
WHAT THE ...?!
はぁ
はぁ
NO PROB-LEM.
.....
PHEW!
THANK YOU, SHAO.
NOW I REALLY AM CURIOUS
MASTER TASUKE...
HMM?



SASH: TRAFFIC SAFETY

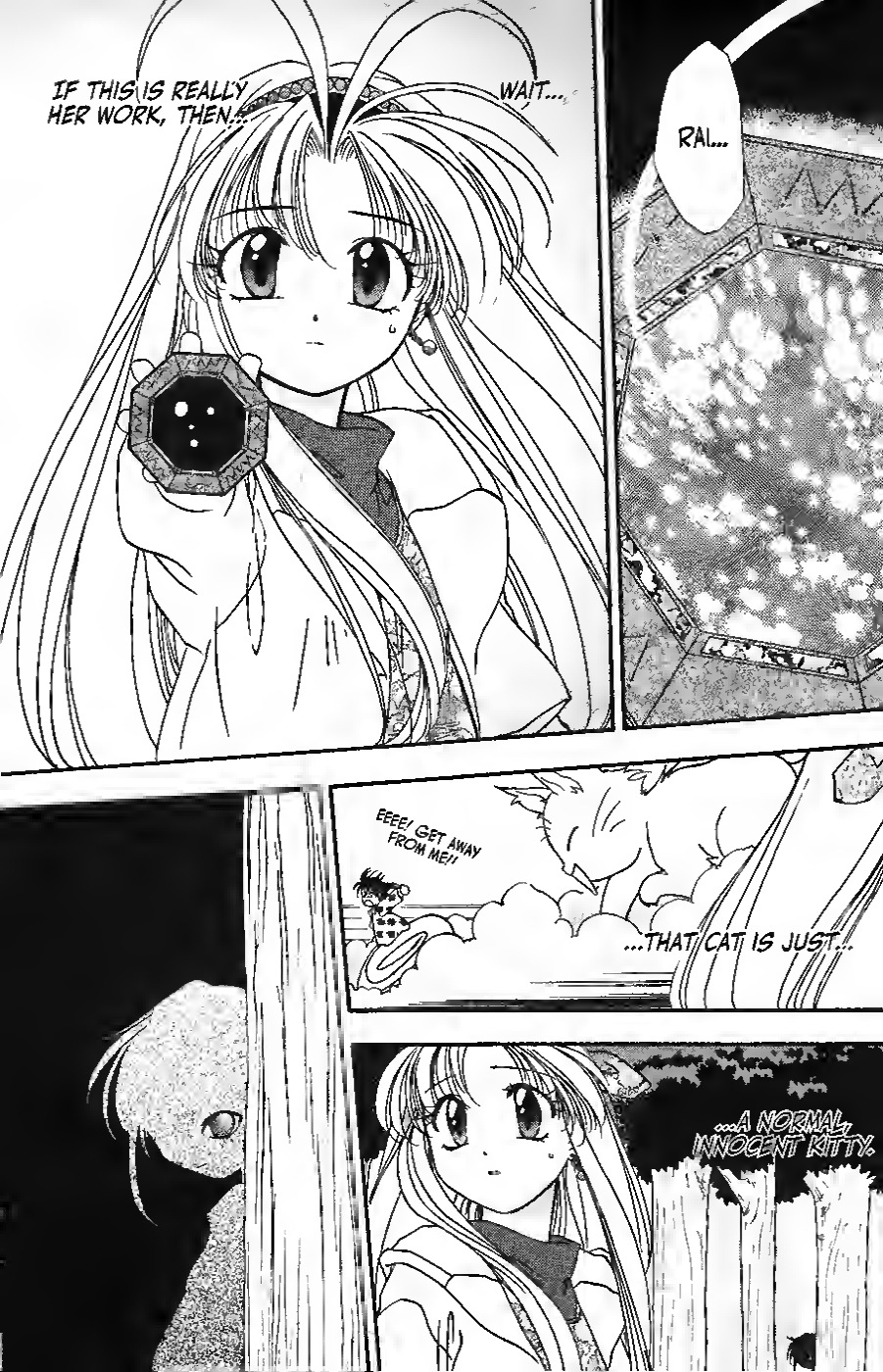


ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NO, SERIOUSLY.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, I'D PROBABLY BE DEAD.
KNEELE
TH-THANK YOU, SHAO.
KNEELE
.....
I'M NOT THE FIRST.
I SEE...
HUMPH.

BUT...
...WHAT WAS THAT EARLIER?
I SHOULD BE USED TO IT BY NOW..
..BUT THIS IS SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT.
UMM... MASTER TASUKE.
I...HAVE BEEN THINKING...
SHA-SHAO...
WHY DON'T WE TALK LATER?!
HUH?

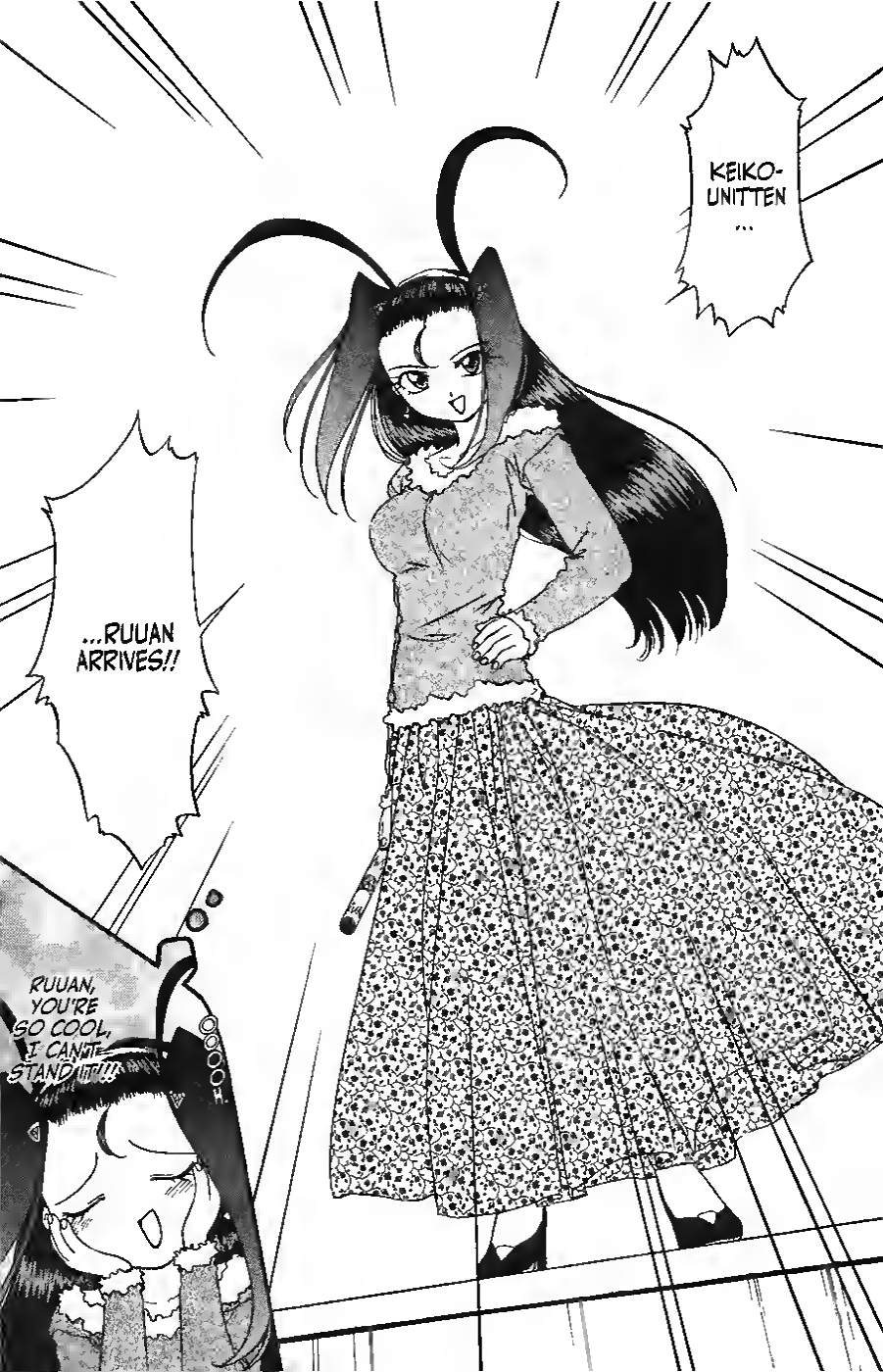
FETMEEEOOW!
CLANK
YEOOOW!!
FROM THE STARS THAT LIGHT THE HEAVENS...
...COME FORTH!
STARS OF SEIRYUU*, DO NOT WEARY OF MY SUMMONS.
THE GETTEN SPIRIT CALLS FOR YOUR RETURN!

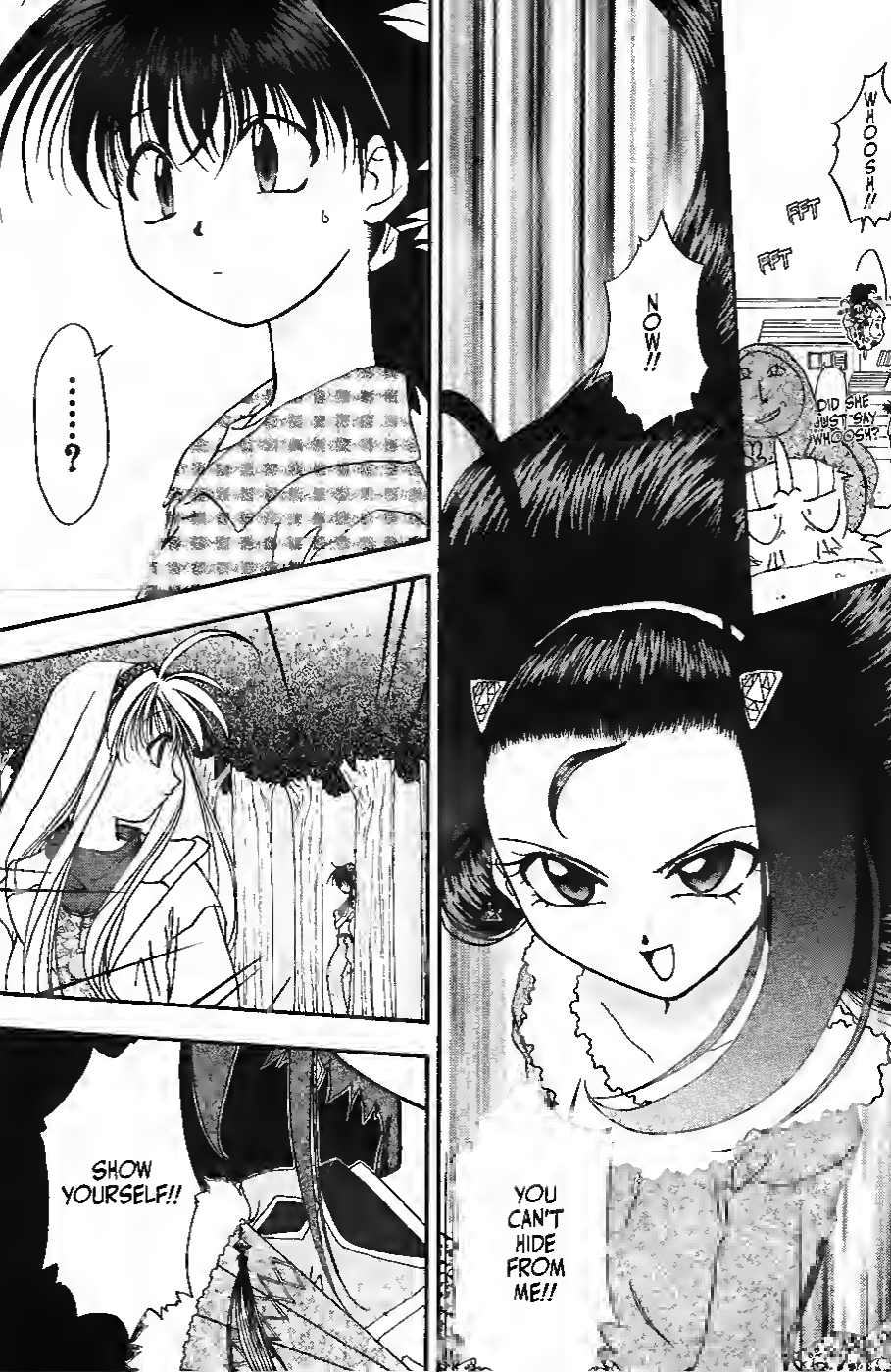
* BLUE DRAGON THAT SYMBOLIZES THE EAST AND SPRING.


IF THIS IS REALLY HER WORK, THEN...
WAIT...
RAL...
EEEE! GET AWAY FROM ME!!
...THAT CAT IS JUST...
...A NORMAL, INNOCENT KITTY.

HEY... W-WAIT A MINUTE...
CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS?
MREEEEOOOOW!
THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING!
...TOO LATE.
IT'S ALREADY...
MASTER TASUKE!!

MREOW?
STOP RIGHT THERE!!


KEIKO-UNITTEN ...
...RUUAN ARRIVES!!
RUUAN, YOU'RE SO COOL, I CAN'T STAND IT!!!
OOOOH.

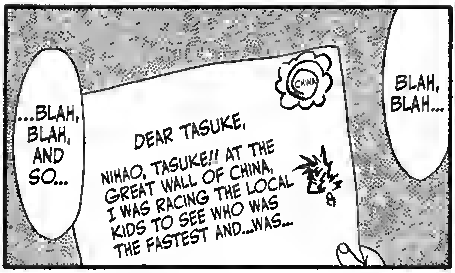

WHOOSH!!
FFT
FFT
NOW!!
DID SHE JUST SAY WHOOSH?
.....?
SHOW YOURSELF!!
YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME!!

I THOUGHT IT WAS HER.
BANNAN CHITEN KIRYUU!!

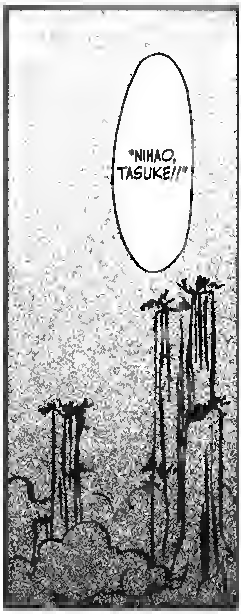
...MY LIEGE.
YOU HAVE...
...CALLED ME OUT...
AND SO...
...I HAVE COME...
THE BANNAN CHITEN IS...
...A SPIRIT OF THE EARTH, ENTRUSTED WITH GROWTH.

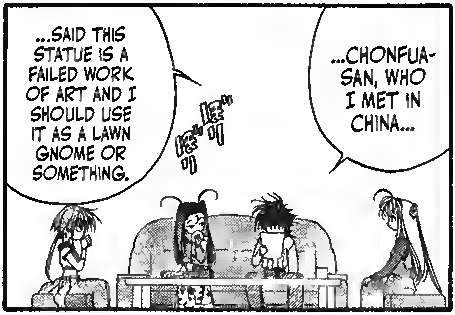
...TO GIVE YOU...
...CHALLENGES AND TRIBULATIONS.
A MINI FAN?
IS THAT... THE FREEBIE FAN FROM EARLIER?
OH, DAD.
ARE YOU TRYING TO PUNISH ME OR SOMETHING?

CHAPTER 40
HERE COMES THE BANNAN @HTEN!
(PART TWO)

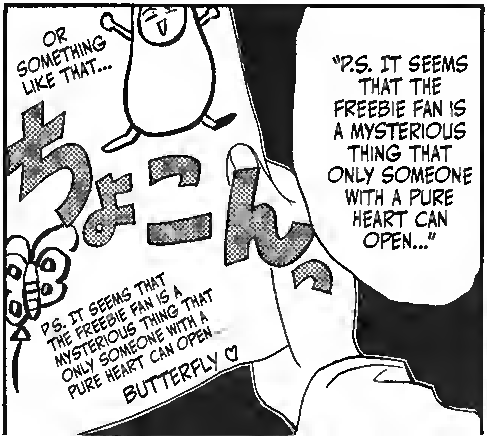

...BLAH, BLAH, AND SO...
DEAR TASUKE,
NIHAO, TASUKE!! AT THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA, I WAS RACING THE LOCAL KIDS TO SEE WHO WAS THE FASTEST AND...WAS...
BLAH, BLAH...

HE SAID A BUNCH OF STUFF THAT DOESN'T MATTER, SO I'LL GIVE YOU THE ABBREVIATED VERSION.

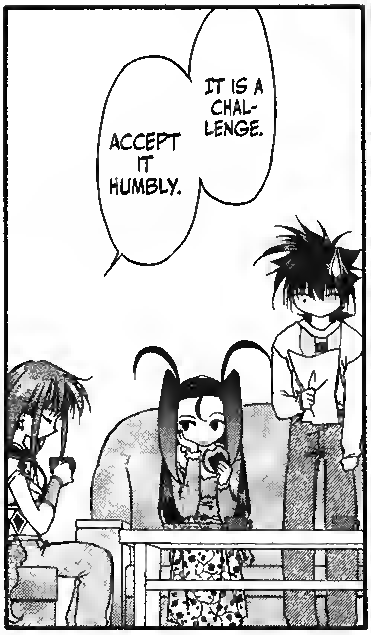

"NIHAO, TASUKE!!"


...SAID THIS STATUE IS A FAILED WORK OF ART AND I SHOULD USE IT AS A LAWN GNOME OR SOMETHING.
...CHONFUA-SAN, WHO I MET IN CHINA...

"CAN'T HELP THAT, SO I'M SENDING IT HOME TO YOU, TASUKE."
"BUT YOUR DEAR OLD DAD, THE TRAVELER, DOESN'T HAVE A YARD."

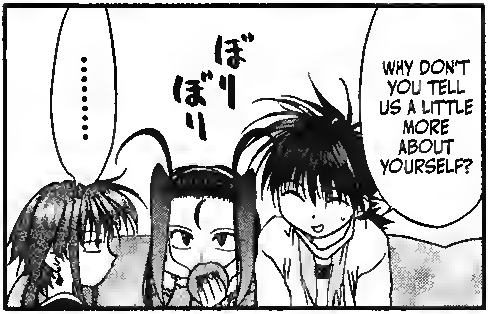

OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
ちょこん
P.S. IT SEEMS THAT THE FREEBIE FAN IS A MYSTERIOUS THING THAT ONLY SOMEONE WITH A PURE HEART CAN OPEN...
BUTTERFLY ♡
"P.S. IT SEEMS THAT THE FREEBIE FAN IS A MYSTERIOUS THING THAT ONLY SOMEONE WITH A PURE HEART CAN OPEN..."

SO WHAAAT...?
"CHONFUA-SAN SAID IT'D MAKE A GOOD LAWN GNOME."
ISN'T THAT NICE, MASTER TAA? ♡
SLURP SLURP

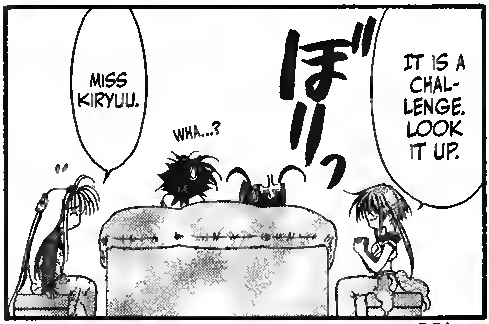

IT IS A CHAL-LENGE.
ACCEPT IT HUMBLY.

MY LIEGE.

DON'T WRITE IT SO FRIGGIN' SMALL!!
THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT PART!
OH MY, FATHER IS SO CUTE. ♡


WHY DON'T YOU TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOURSELF?
ぼりぼり
.....

SIGH... I GUESS THAT'S ALL RIGHT...
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE IF THERE ARE TWO OR THREE OF THEM.
...FOR NOW?

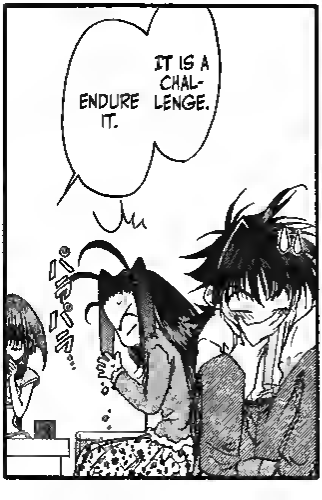

IT IS A CHAL-LENGE. LOOK IT UP.
ぼりっ
WHA...?
MISS KIRYUU.

MASTER TASUKE...
...I CAN TELL YOU.
THIS IS MISS KIRYUU, THE BANNAN CHITEN.
SHE IS A SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
LIKE THE SHITENRIN AND THE KOKU-TENTOU...
...SHE IS CALLED FORTH FROM A FAN CALLED THE TANTENSEN.
JUST AS I PROTECT MY MASTER AND RUUAN MAKES HER MASTER HAPPY...
...MISS KIRYUU'S DUTY IS TO CREATE CHALLENGES FOR HER MASTER.

パサッ
……

CREATE...
...CHAL-LENGES?

BANSHOU...
...TAIRAN.

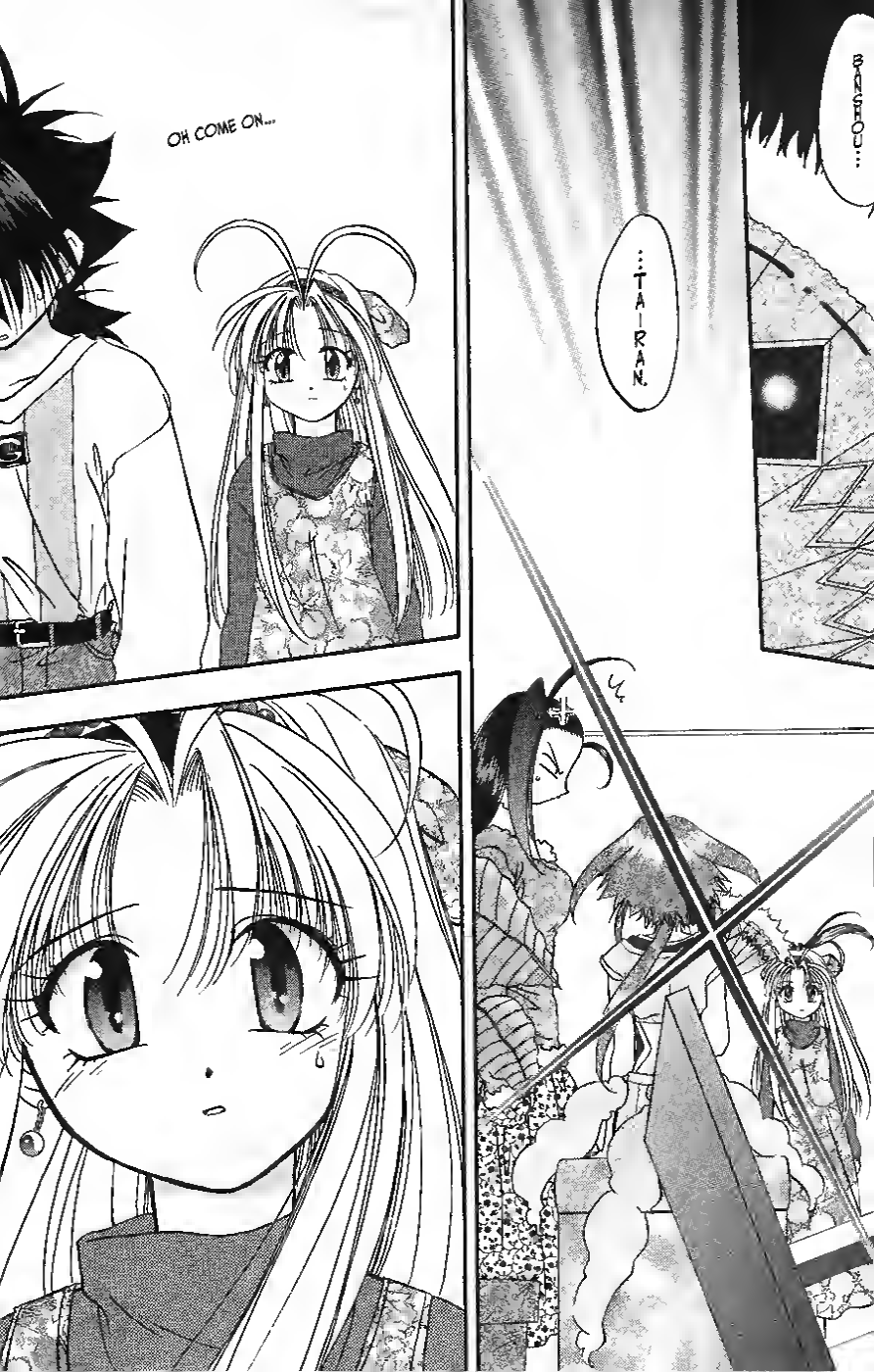

IT IS A CHAL-LENGE.
ENDURE IT.
パラパラ...

URF!!
ガバッ

TAIRAN.
OOF...
I...
I SEE. THIS IS KIRYUU'S POWER.
MAKING THINGS BIG AND SMALL.
TASUKE WON'T LOSE!!
IT IS A CHALLENGE. GET UP.
MY RICE CRACKER!
NA-NASTER TASUKE!!
THUNK
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANY-MOOREE!!
YOU WILL STOP WHAT YOU ARE DOING TO MY CRA...I MEAN, MY MASTER TAA!!

ピタッ!!
STOP!!
……
しゃっ


OH COME ON...
...TAIRAN.
SANSHOU...

MASTER TASUKE, WATCH OUT!!

MASTER TAA!!
MASTER TAA...?
.....
SHAO?!

I'M...ALL RIGHT.
IT'S JUST A SCRATCH.
MISS SHAO
IT INCONVENIENCES ME WHEN YOU INTERFERE.
THE CHALLENGE IS INTENDED FOR MY LIEGE.

ENOUGH ALREADY.
OKAY, LADY. I CALLED YOU OUT.
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO TO ME, BUT...
...LEAVE SHAO OUT OF THIS.

JUST A MINUTE!
DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH?!
MISS SHAO...
...INVOLVED HERSELF
THAT WAS NOT MY INTENTION.
LEAVE IT ALONE, RUUAN.
WHY?
.....

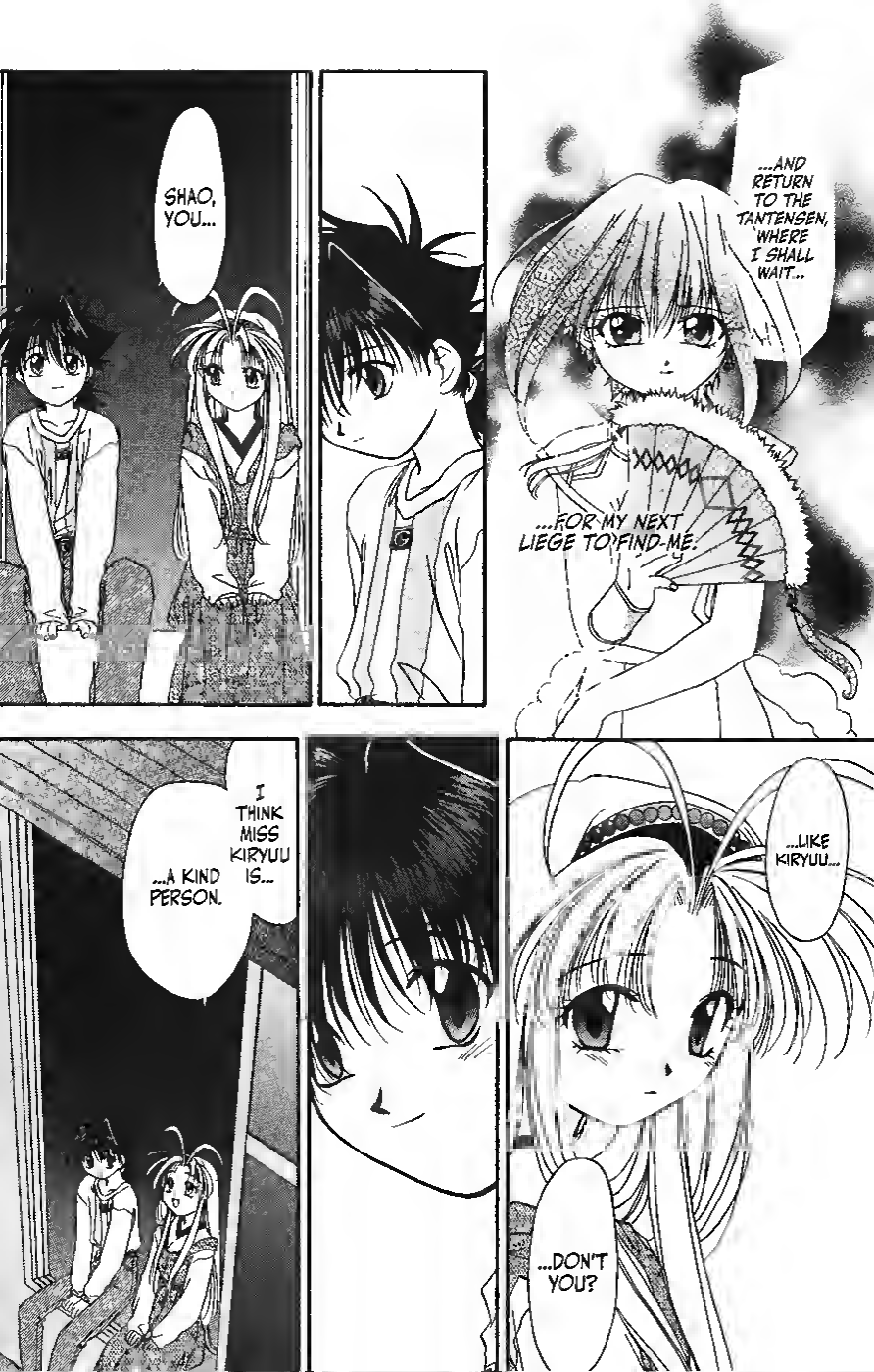
IF YOU ARE GOING TO INVOLVE OTHER PEOPLE...
...TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR DUTIES, THEN...
...I CAN'T LET YOU STAY HERE.
KIRYUU...
.....
IT'S TOO MUCH TROUBLE.

すくっ
I UNDERSTAND.
MISS KIRYUU?
I SHALL DEPART.
パ
I WILL TAKE MY LEAVE...
...AND RETURN TO THE TANTEN-SEN...
...WHERE I SHALL WAIT...
...FOR MY NEXT LIEGE TO FIND ME.

MASTER TASUKE.
HMM?

...THAT OUR MASTER DOESN'T NEED US...
THAT'S WHY IF WE FEEL...
...THE ONLY REASON WE CAN BE HERE.
TO BE OF USE TO OUR MASTERS IS...
...LIVE ONLY FOR OUR MASTERS' SAKE.
...SUM- MONED BY OUR MASTERS AND...
WE ARE...
...GO BACK.
...WE HAVE TO...
...WE ARE ALWAYS WAITING.
...MASTER TASUKE...
BUT, YOU KNOW...

...WHEN OUR MASTER WILL SUMMON US.
...FOR THE DAY...
WAITING IN THAT DARK, LONELY PLACE...
THAT'S WHY...
...FOR THE PERSON WHO WILL GIVE US A REASON TO LIVE.
...WE WAIT PATIENTLY...
THE WHOLE TIME...
"I WILL TAKE MY LEAVE..."


...AND RETURN TO THE TANTENSEN, WHERE I SHALL WAIT...
...FOR MY NEXT LIEGE TO FIND ME.
SHAO, YOU...
...LIKE KIRYUU...
...DON'T YOU?
I THINK MISS KIRYUU IS...
...A KIND PERSON.

IF YOU GET TO KNOW HER...
...I THINK YOU'LL SEE, MASTER TASUKE.
HO-NESTLY, I...
...REGRET BEING SO HASTY.
IF I ACCEPT KIRYUU'S CHALLENGES...
...THEN SOMEDAY I'LL OVER-COME THEM.
AND THEN MAYBE I'LL BECOME...
...STRONG ENOUGH TO SAVE YOU!!

MAYBE I'LL BE ABLE TO FREE HER FROM HER FATE AS THE SHUGOGETTEN.
MY LIEGE...

I'M SORRY ABOUT EARLIER.
I THOUGHT ABOUT THINGS AGAIN.
WHY DID YOU CALL ME?
...TOO MUCH TROUBLE, CORRECT?
I AM...
I'M READY. LET'S DO IT!!
THOSE BANNAN CHITEN CHAL-LENGES OR WHAT-EVER...

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!
IT'S PROBABLY SAFE TO ASSUME THAT MY DAYS ARE GOING TO GET EVEN ROUGHER...
THIS IS HOW OUR FAMILY GREW BY ONE MORE.

DEAR DAD...
HOW ARE YOU DOING?
THANKS FOR SENDING ME THAT...
...TANTEN-SEN.
WELL, IT TURNS OUT...
...IT'S REALLY ...
...VERY USEFUL.
H--
HEY.

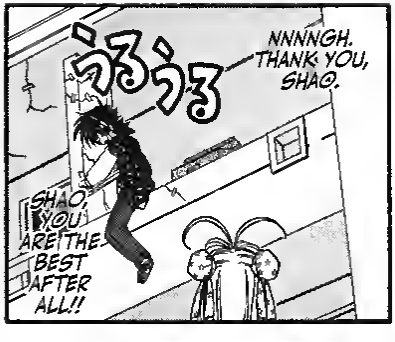
CHAPTER 41
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES (PART ONE)

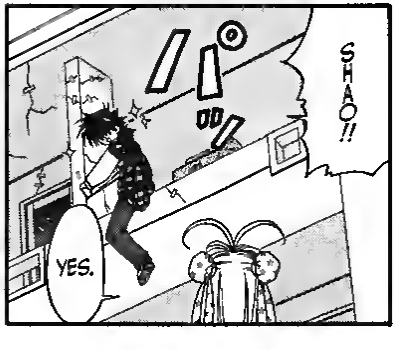
AAHH!!
DON'T DO THAT... PLEASE...
IF YOU MAKE THAT BIGGER...
DAD...
...THE HOUSE WILL...
IT IS A CHALLENGE. RECTIFY IT.
...COLLAPSE.

RIGHT NOW, I'M...
...SWIMMING IN A SEA OF REGRET.
OOH...WHY DID I...
...AGREE TO TAKE ON THE IBANNAICHITEN CHALLENGES?
WHAT WAS...
...I THINKING?
トーン
はぅ
JUST A MINUTE, YOU!!
WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU MAKING MASTER TAA DO?!
OH, RUUAN...
YOU ARE SUCH A KIND SPIRIT!!
THANKS, RUUAN.
ARIGATO
NIHAO
XIEXIE

THE VOICE OF AN ANGEL!!
MASTER TASUKE!

I TAKE IT BACK!!!
OH MYYY, WHAT A HUGE MANJYUUUUU!
RUUAN WON'T SAY ANOTHER WORD.
SO MAKE LOTS OF YUMMY THINGS BIG, OKAY?

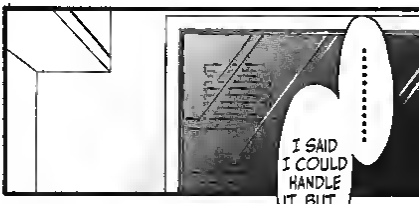

うるうる
NNNNGH. THANK YOU, SHAO.
SHAO, YOU ARE THE BEST AFTER ALL!!


パ
SHAO!!
YES.

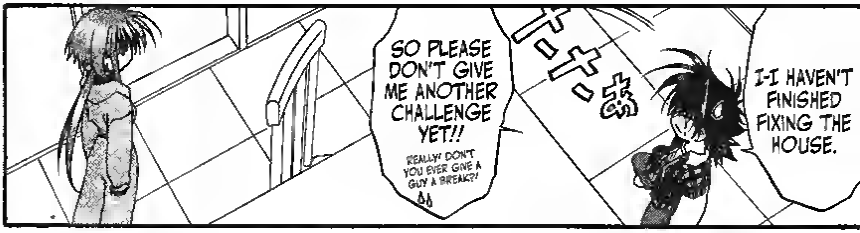
I'LL HELP YOU!
I'LL CALL THE LIRINGUN

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
I CAN HANDLE THIS.
IF YOU HELP ME...
...IT WOULDN'T BE A CHALLENGE, WOULD IT?
OH...
BUT MAYBE...
...WHEN I'M DONE FIXING EVERYTHING...
...COULD YOU HAVE THE LIRINGUN FIX IT FOR REAL?
I'M ONLY AN AMATEUR CARPENTER
YES.
.....

!!!
ぴくっ


.....
I SAID I COULD HANDLE IT, BUT...

...HONESTLY, I THINK..
...I'M GOING TO CRACK.
どべー
OOH, I GOTTA TAKE A BREAK.


SO PLEASE DON'T GIVE ME ANOTHER CHALLENGE YET!!
REALLY! DON'T YOU EVER GIVE A GUY A BREAK?
I-I HAVEN'T FINISHED FIXING THE HOUSE.

OH--SHE JUST CAME TO GET A MANJYUU TO TAME RUUAN WITH...
IGNORES!!!

カチ カチ カチ カチ カチ カチ カチ
S—I—G—H.
I BETTER GET BACK TO WORK SOON...
FIXING THE HOUSE
...Yawn...
OH, BUT I'M ALREADY SOOOOO ...
DIDN'T I DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS YESTERDAY?
.....
MASTER TASUKE ...
OH.

MASTER TASUKE.
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE GOING TO CRACK?
SHAO.
WHA- WHAT?
DID SHE HEAR WHAT I JUST SAID?
NOT REALLY.
OH, NO. HEH.
I'M GOING TO CRACK!!
?
CRACKING. CRACKING.

I...
...TO GIVE YOU STRENGTH AND MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.
...WILL COOK YOU LOTS OF DISHES...
IF...
...YOU REALLY ARE GOING TO CRACK...
...PLEASE SAY SOME-THING, OKAY?
UH...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME.
BUT REALLY ...
...I'M FINE.
THANK YOU.

SOMETIMES I FEEL...
REALLY?
REALLY.
...LIKE SUCH A PATHETIC AND WEAK PERSON.
...OVER SOME SILLY CHALLENGE?
LIKE RIGHT NOW. WHY DO I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO CRY?

† THE URINGUN ARE SUPPOSED TO FIX IT TOMORROW.

MISS KIRYUU...
HUH? IS SOMEONE ON THE ROOF?
AND KIRYUU-SHAO?
MISS KIRYUU.
WHAT'S WRONG?
HE SAYS WHILE HE EAVESDROPS
ちょこん
SIGH...
I WONDER WHAT SHAO AND KIRYUU ARE TALKING ABOUT.

DOES..
...MY LIEGE...
...DISLIKE ME?
HIS ATTITUDE SUGGESTS SO.
UH...
IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE
IT IS ONLY NATURAL TO HATE ME FOR THE THINGS I AM DOING.
I KNOW...
...MYSELF.
BEGINNING THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO...
...THE SAME THING HAS BEEN REPEATED.

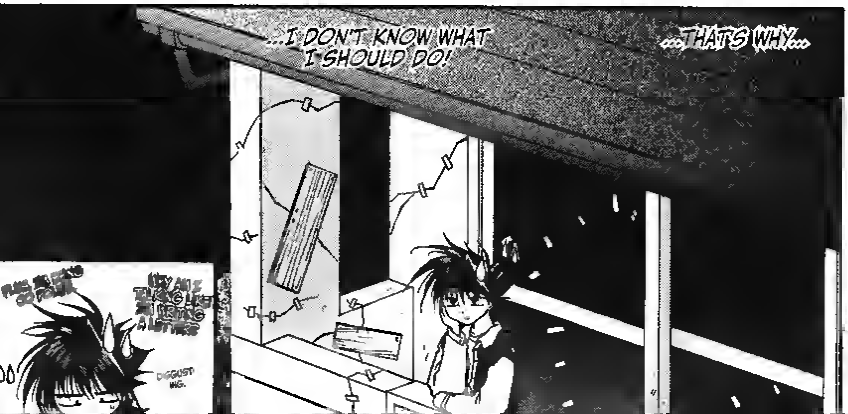
CHAL-
LENGES...
...ARE NOT
SOMETHING
HUMANS SEEK
WILLINGLY.
.....

COMPLAINING TO YOU WON'T HELP ANYTHING MISS SHAO
I AM SORRY

MAYBE I CAN ...
... COMPLAIN TO YOU, MISS KIRYUU ...
...WHEN I'M WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING TOO.
P.S.
YOU SHOULD GO HOME TOO. IF YOU DON'T, I'LL CATCH YOU, MISSISHKO!
DAD...
THANK YOU.

...ISN'T THE KIND OF PERSON I THOUGHT SHE WAS, BUT...
MAYBE...
...KIRYUU...

BUT...
...WAS RIGHT ABOUT HER.
"...A KIND PERSON."
"I THINK MISS KIRYUU IS..."
...MAYBE SHAO...


...I DON'T KNOW WHAT I SHOULD DO!
...THAT'S WHY...

CHAPTER 49:
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES (PART TWO)

CHIRP
CHIRP
.....
.....
SLEEPY.
SCRUNCH
.....
.....
.....
?

READY.
MASTER TASUKE.
OH, SHAO!!
YES.
...YOU'LL BE LATE.
YOU BETTER GET GOING SOON OR...

WILL YOU GO TO SCHOOL ...
...AND WAIT FOR ME AT THE FRONT GATE?
O...KAY.
ホッホオオ
FLAMES OF THE SOUL
MASTER TAA, WHY? WHAT'S WROONG?!
RUUAN HAS TO STAY WITH MASTER TAAA!!
NOOO! NOOO!
.....

I THINK...
...YOU'RE RIGHT.
WOULD YOU QUIT DRAGGING ME ALREADY?
ずるずる
MAS-TER TAA...
...IS UP TO SOME-THING.
ずるずるずるずる
DON'T YA THINK?
NOW...
LET'S DO THIS!!

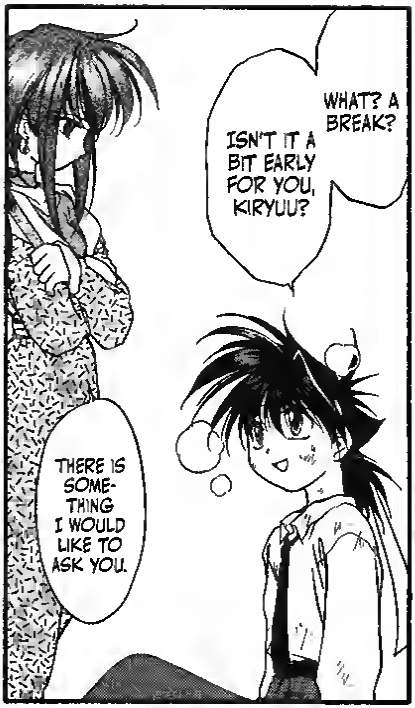
ドドド

UH...
MANHOLE COVER
H--
HUGE
...
MY FIRST CHALLENGE OF THE DAY!!

WAI--
WAIT A MINUTE!!
WELL, THAT'S ONE DOWN.
FOR NOW...
カタ
カタ

I'M...
I'M SUR-
ROUNDED.
HUUUH?!!
AH
HA!!
I WILL
NOT
LOSE!!
HEAVE HO.
HEAVE HO.
HEAVE HO.

AAAHH!!
W--
I CAN'T GET A BREAK, NOT EVEN FOR A SECOND.
*PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE: RACER. THAT'S
WOULDN'T EXPECT ANY LESS FROM A PRO.


WHAT? A BREAK?
ISN'T IT A BIT EARLY FOR YOU, KIRYUU?
THERE IS SOME-THING I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU.

HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO SLEEP THERE?
GET UP.

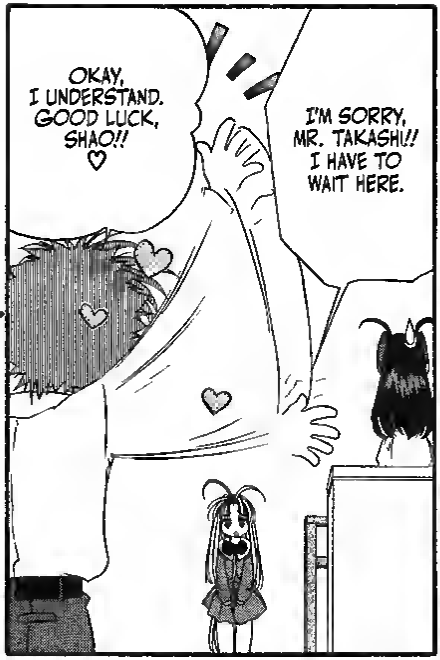
WHY...
...DID YOU WRITE THIS?

THIS...
WHAT IS IT?
TASUKE SHICHIRI'S TRAINING REQUEST: DON'T LET ME GET TO SCHOOL.

I WON-
DERED
...
...IF
MAYBE
...
I
THOUGHT
ABOUT
THINGS
...
...IN MY
OWN
WAY.
...KIRYU.
...YOU AND
I COULD
GET
ALONG
BETTER...

THE WAY WE'VE BEEN GOING ABOUT THINGS...
...IS EXHAUST-ING FOR BOTH OF US.
AFTER ALL, YOU'RE A PART OF THE FAMILY NOW.
LIPSEY DAISEY.
THAT'S WHY I GAVE YOU THAT PAPER.
AS TO WHAT IT MEANS...
...I'LL TELL YOU WHEN I GET TO SCHOOL!!

NOT TO CUT SHORT OUR CONVERSATION BUT..
LET'S GET THIS GOING! I'M ALREADY LATE!!
MISS SHAORIN, MISS RUUAN!!
CLASS STARTED A WHILE AGO, YOU KNOW!!



* HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING.

HEY, KIRYUU!!
DON'T GO EASY ON ME!!
.....
ELECTRIC POLE
GIVE ME A CHALLENGE THAT'S SO HARD I COULD DIE!!
BRING IT ON!
!!!

ACK!!
.....
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY TRYING TO KILL ME...?

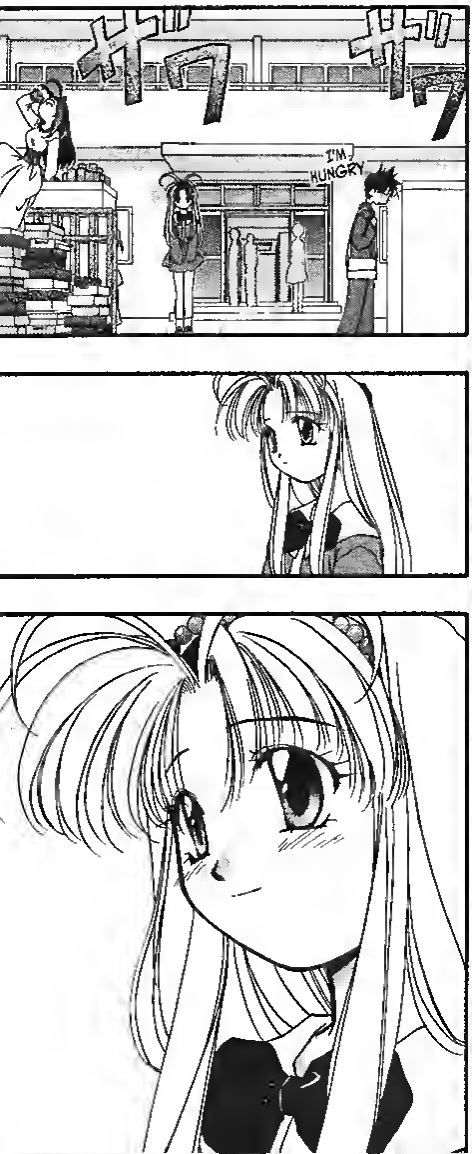
"DOES..."

I THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALL NIGHT AND...
...I REALIZED THAT...
"...MY LIEGE..."
"...DISLIKE ME?"
...I...
...FROM THE DAY KIRYUU CAME TO MY HOUSE...
...HAVEN'T EVEN OVERCOME...

EVEN THOUGH...
...THIS ISN'T A REALLY THE CHALLENGE...
...A SINGLE CHALLENGE.
...I NEED TO OVERCOME. THE REAL CHALLENGE...
...IS SOMEWHERE ELSE.

OOF...
I FINALLY MADE IT TO THE TOP...
SIGH... NOW I JUST HAVE TO GET DOWN AND...
WHAT?
WHERE'S THE SCHOOL?
MY LIEGE.
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. GIVE UP.
I AM NOT SO EASY.

YOU HAVE GIVEN ME MY INSTRUC-TIONS.
YOU WILL NEVER REACH THIS "SCHOOL" PLACE, MY LIEGE.
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
SHAO...
...IS WAITING FOR ME!!


I'M HUNGRY
AND BESIDES...
...DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY I GAVE YOU THAT PAPER?

MASTER TASUKE!!

I MADE IT, DIDN'T I?
I GOT TO SCHOOL!
KIRYUU...
.....
YOU PROMISED.
TELL ME WHY YOU GAVE ME THIS REQUEST.

I FIGURED, I WOULD NEVER ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGES...
...UNLESS IT WAS SOMETHING I WANTED TO DO.
OTHERWISE...
...IT'D JUST BE LIKE SOME SORT OF PUNISHMENT FORCED ON ME...
...AND I CAN'T OVERCOME THAT, RIGHT?

THEN IT'S JUST A WASTE OF EFFORT.
AFTER ALL...
...THIS IS A CHANCE TO GROW.
INSTEAD OF RESENTING THE CHALLENGES...
...IF WE WORK TOGETHER, RIGHT?
...IT'S MORE EFFECTIVE FOR BOTH OF US...

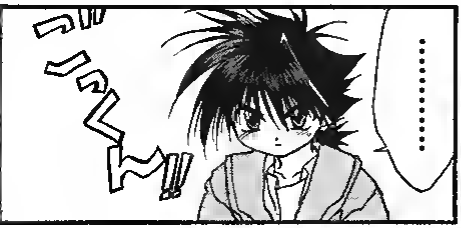
I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.
YES.

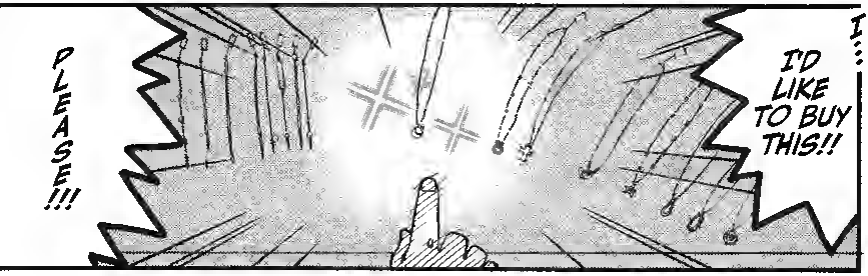
MY LIEGE...
YOU ARE QUITE DIFFERENT.
YOU THINK SO?
BUT I THINK IT IS A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU TO...
...ACCEPT MY CHALLENGES WILLINGLY.
IT MAKES IT...
...WORTHWHILE FOR ME AS WELL.
OKAY!!
KEEP THAT ATTITUDE, MY LIEGE, AND TOMORROW WE BEGIN AGAIN!!
SPEED UP!!

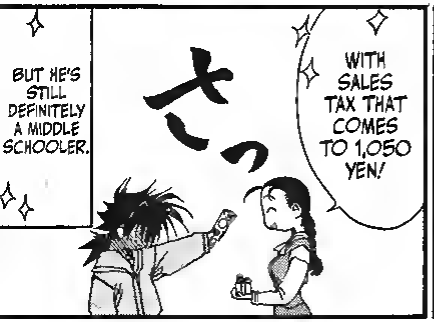
SIDE STORY 1
TASUKE AND SHAO'S CHRISTMAS... ♡

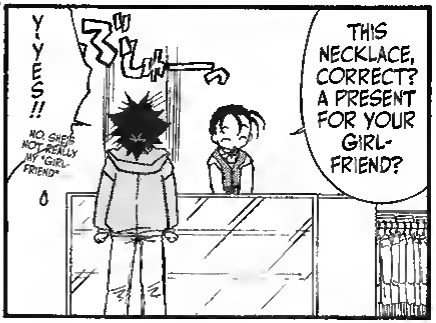
1 TASUKE'S BIG DECISION!!

UH OH! TASUKE'S DOING SOMETHING DARING. ♡



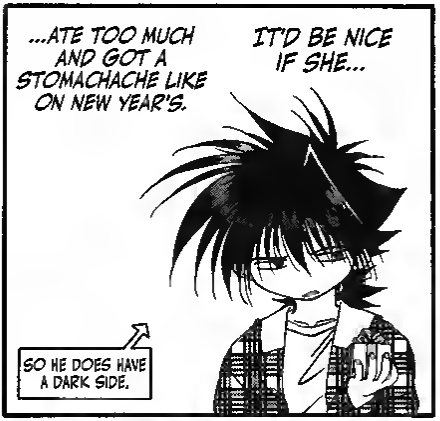


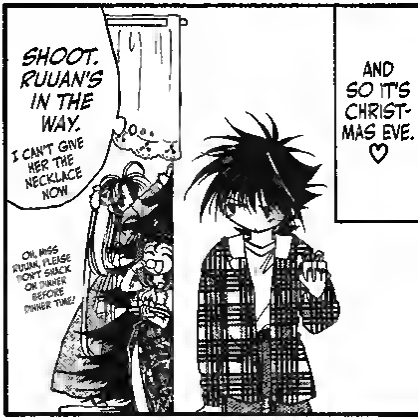


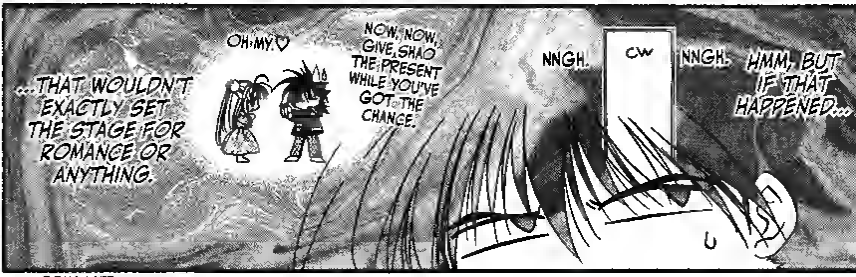


2 CHRISTMAS PARTY!!

YOU GET IT, DON'T YOU, TASUKE? ♡




SHOOT. RUUAN'S IN THE WAY.
I CAN'T GIVE HER THE NECKLACE NOW
OH, MISS RUUAN, PLEASE DON'T SNACK ON DINNER BEFORE DINNER TIME!
AND SO IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE. ♡

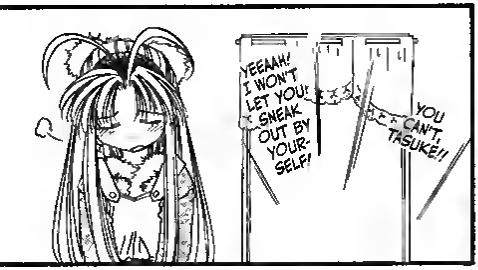

...THAT WOULDN'T EXACTLY SET THE STAGE FOR ROMANCE OR ANYTHING.
OH MY♡
NOW, NOW, GIVE SHAO THE PRESENT WHILE YOU'VE GOT THE CHANCE.
NNGH.
CW
NNGH.
HMM, BUT IF THAT HAPPENED...

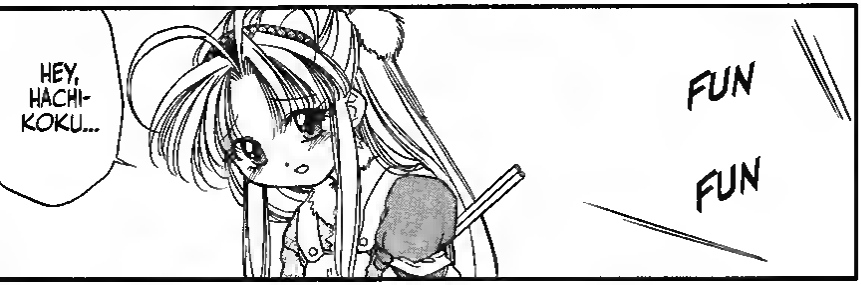
ROMANCE?

I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN.
IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT...
MASTER TASUKE, EVERYONE WANTS TO HAVE A CHRISTMAS PARTY. ♡
HEY, TASUKE, WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
JUST STANDING THERE?

3 SHAO'S WORRIES

SOMETIMES YOU WORRY ABOUT THE STRANGEST THINGS.



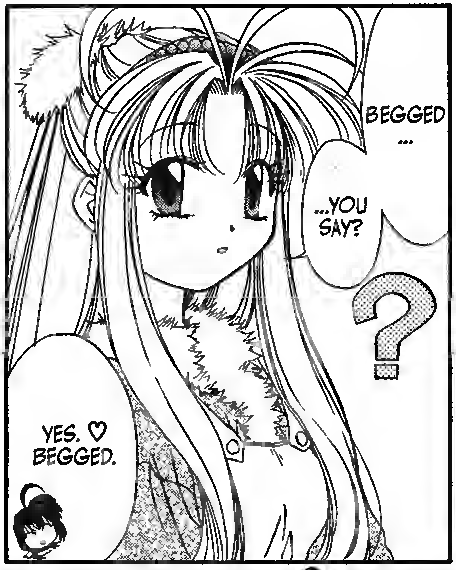


THIS, FOR EXAMPLE, IS A STRANGE THING TO WORRY ABOUT.
KATSUO
THE BONITO SHAVING WILL GET STALE UNLESS WE TIE IT UP.
IS THERE A RUBBER BAND OR SOMETHING?

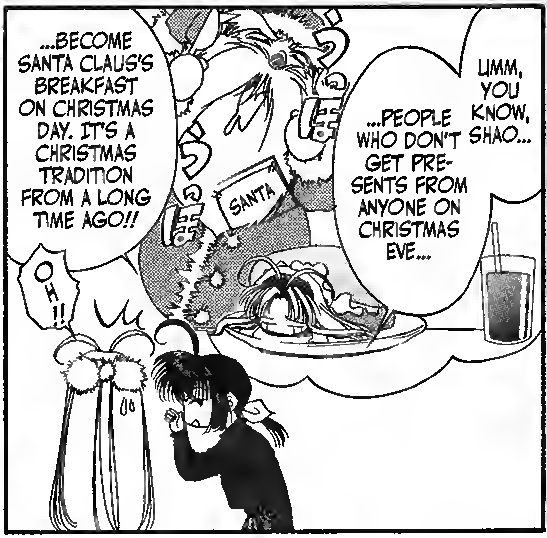
NO!! IT'S A BIG DEAL. STALE KATSUOBUSHI MAKES YOUR MISO SOUP TASTE BAD!

4 SHOUKO'S "OPERATION: SANTA CLAUS'S BREAKFAST"!!

EVEN THOUGH SHE HASN'T APPEARED VERY MUCH LATELY, AUTHOR SAKURANO LIKES SHOUKO

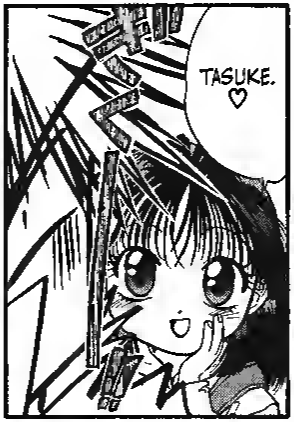


OH, NO!! THEN, I HAVE TO GET SOMETHING TO TIE THE KATSUOBUSHI WITH FROM MASTER TASUKE SOON!!
OR I'LL BE EATEN!
ガタッ
WHAT?!
DID I MISS SOMETHING?

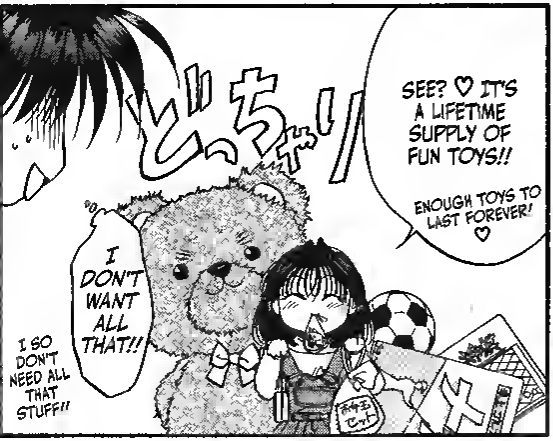

...BECOME SANTA CLAUS'S BREAKFAST ON CHRISTMAS DAY. IT'S A CHRISTMAS TRADITION FROM A LONG TIME AGO!!
SANTA
OH!!
...PEOPLE WHO DON'T GET PRE-SENTS FROM ANYONE ON CHRISTMAS EVE...
UMM, YOU KNOW, SHAO...

5 KAORI'S PRESENT ☆

I REALLY LIKE PLAYING TOO. I WANT TO GO TO AN AMUSEMENT PARK.



...IT IS CHRISTMAS EVE!!
I KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS!
SH-SHE SOUNDS ALL NERVOUS AND EMBARRASSED...LIKE SHE'S GONNA DO SOMETHING GIRLY AND...

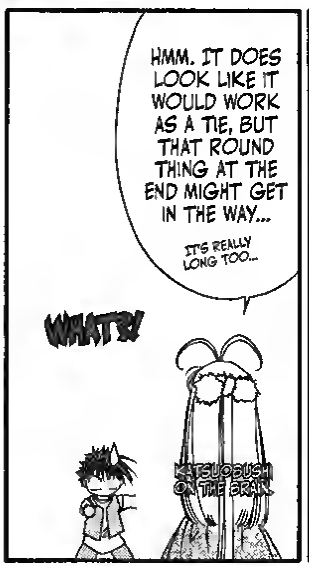


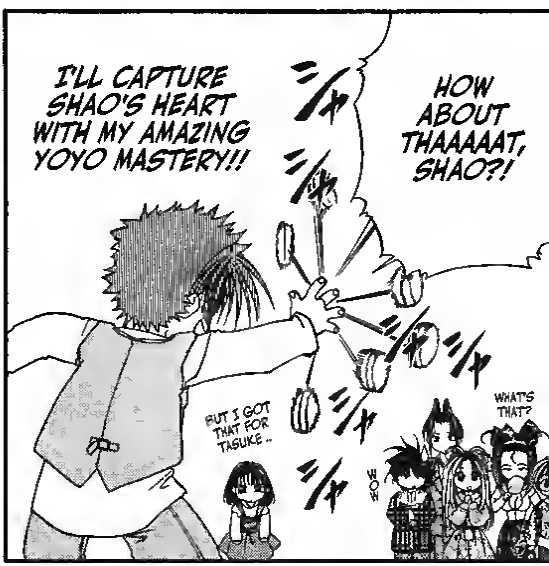
6 TAKASHI'S "OPERATION: GET SHAO" AGAIN!!

MY ASSISTANT WAS CRYING ABOUT HOW HARD IT IS TO PASTE THE TONES FOR TAKASHI'S HAIR.

AS SOON AS THE YOYO LEAVES MY HANDS, IT SLICES THROUGH THE AIR LIKE SOME MYTHIC MONSTER.
I WILL IMPRESS YOU ALL!
HUMPH.
SINCE I WAS 3 I'VE BEEN CALLED A YOYO PRODIGY AND NOW I'M THE YOYO KING.
YESSUH!!

HE STILL DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.


HMM. IT DOES LOOK LIKE IT WOULD WORK AS A TIE, BUT THAT ROUND THING AT THE END MIGHT GET IN THE WAY...
IT'S REALLY LONG TOO...
WHAT?!
KITSUOUJI ON THE BRAIN



7 IZUMO VS. TASUKE--IT'S BEEN A WHILE

I FEEL LIKE WRITING ANOTHER BATTLE BETWEEN TASUKE AND IZUMO. ♡

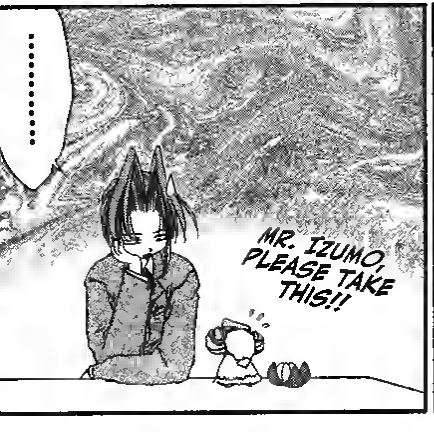
ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?
MISS SHAORIN.
HMM.
OOH, THEN THIS WOULD BE PERFECT.
YES, SOMETHING THAT CAN SEAL OFF THE NECK OF A BAG SO THE KATSUOBUSHI WON'T GO STALE.
WHAT A CLEVER WAY TO GET TO TOUCH MISS SHAORIN'S HAIR. ♡
THERE. WHILE I'M AT IT, LET ME HELP YOU PUT YOUR HAIR INTO A PONYTAIL.
YOU CAN HAVE MY HAIR TIE.
OH, BUT THAT'S NO GOOD BECAUSE I GAVE IT TO MASTER TASUKE.
I CAN'T ASK HIM TO GIVE IT BACK TO ME NOW.
WOW. MASTER TASUKE'S RIBBON LOOKS PERFECT.

8 WHY DOESN'T RUUAN GET FAT? WE MUST KNOW!!
I'M SO JEALOUS, RUUAN!!
OR SHOULD I SAY A DISTURBINGLY HEALTHY APPETITE. YOU'LL GET FAT EATING LIKE THAT.
YOU SURE DO HAVE A HEALTHY APPETITE, MISS RUUAN...
TASUKE IS SUCH A PAIN, ISN'T HE?
YOUTENSHIN BACTERIA LIVE IN MY STOMACH SO I WON'T GET FAT!!
FIRST PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF RUUAN'S MEASUREMENTS!!
BUST 36"
WAIST 22"
HIPS 34"
...KIND OF GROSS.
KEEP YOUR COOTIES AWAY FROM ME!
WRIGGLE
THAT'S...

9 FROM RISHU TO YOU ♡

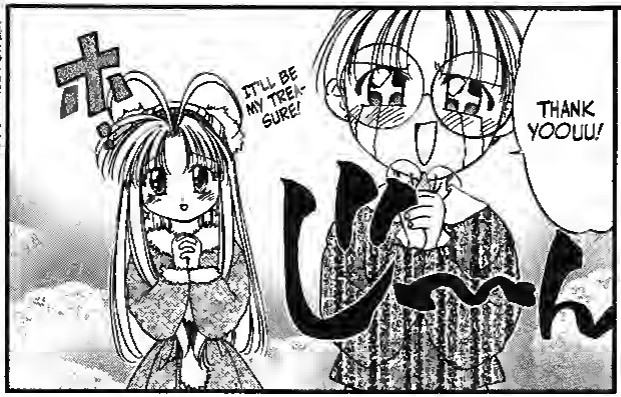
IF I HAD SOME FREE TIME, I'D LIKE TO MAKE A RISHU DOLL.

IF I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO BE THE CASE THEN I WOULD'VE GONE TO THE PARTY WITH THE PEOPLE FROM THE "IZUMO FAN CLUB."
NO ONE EVEN GOT ME A PRESENT.



10 KOICHIROU'S TREASURE

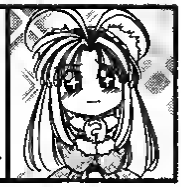
KOICHIROU KEEPS ON GETTING SMALLER AND SMALLER.

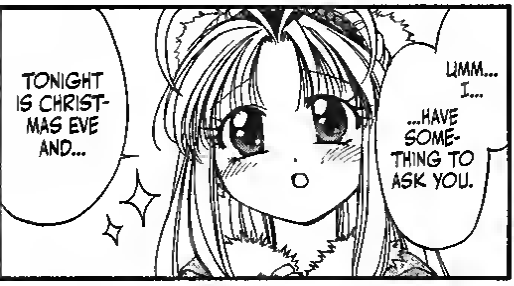


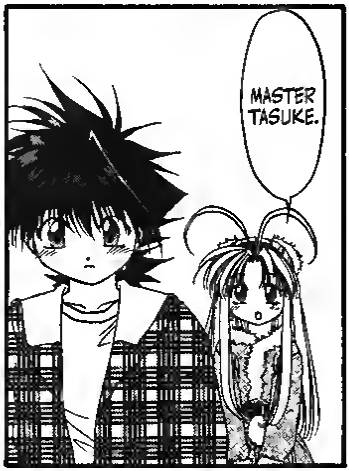
ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO TREASURE A SHRIMP, KOICHIROU?

11 A SHOCKING CONFESSION!!

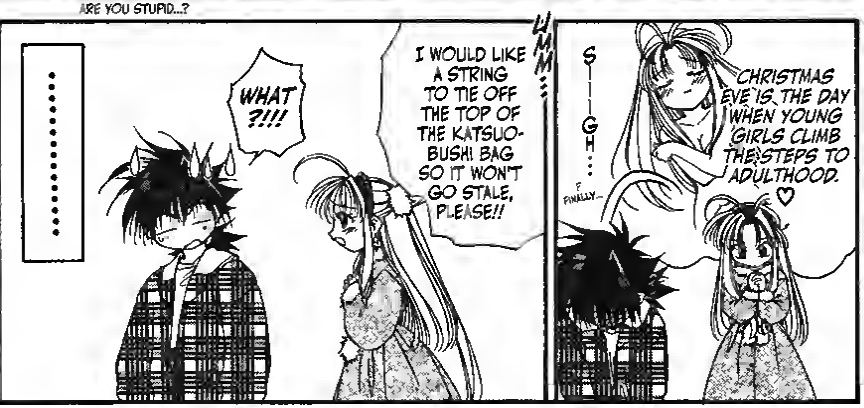
WHEN I DRAW TASUKE AND SHAO, I GET EMBARRASSED...







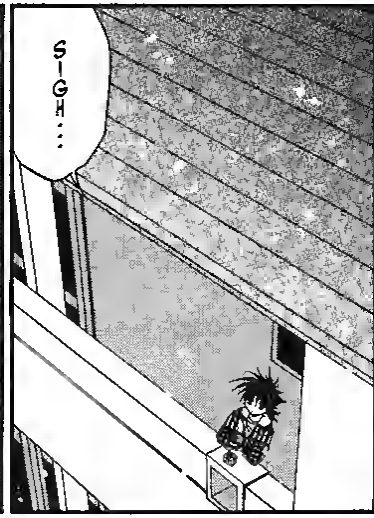
ARE YOU STUPID...?

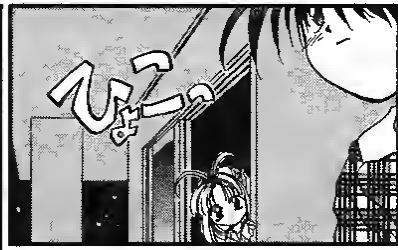

.....
WHAT ?!!!
I WOULD LIKE A STRING TO TIE OFF THE TOP OF THE KATSUO-BUSHI BAG SO IT WON'T GO STALE, PLEASE!!
UMM...
S---GH...
FINALLY...
CHRISTMAS EVE IS THE DAY WHEN YOUNG GIRLS CLIMB THE STEPS TO ADULTHOOD.

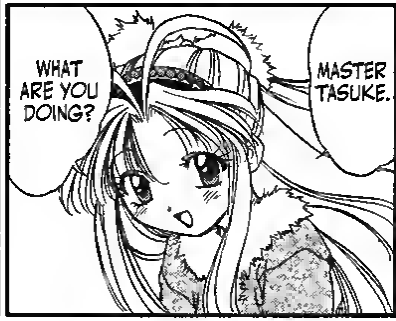
12 AND THEN...SHE GETS THE MESSAGE

IT'S BEEN A WHILE AND IT WAS FUN WRITING A CHEERFUL STORY. ♡

HUMPH...ALL MY EFFORTS TO BUILD UP MY COURAGE...
...ARE WIPED OUT BY A STRING TO TIE THE TOP OF A BAG OF KATSUOBUSHI SO IT WON'T GO STALE.



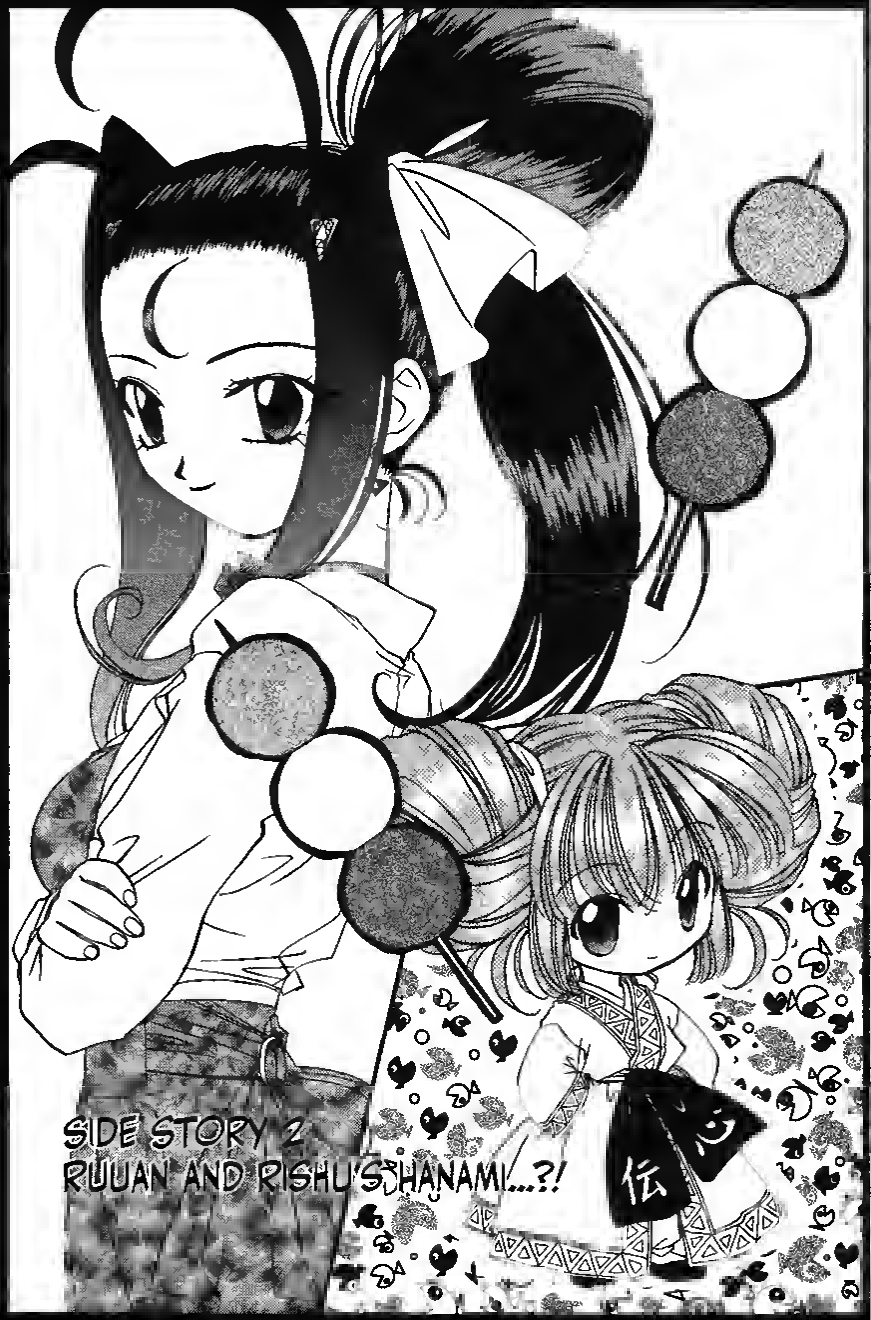




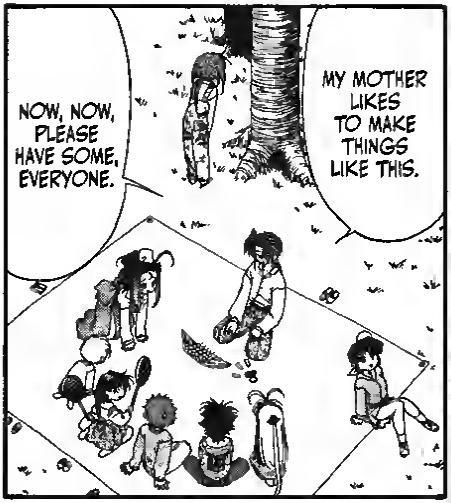
WHERE IS EVERY-ONE?
THEY HAD TOO MUCH FUN AND FELL ASLEEP.
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANTED.
I'LL FIND A STRING FOR YOU LATER.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I FOLDED IT SO THAT AIR DOESN'T GET INSIDE.
OH, OKAY.
THAT WORKS.
WELL... I DID BUY IT SO I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE IT TO HER...
.....
HERE.
UMMM...
I GOT YOU A CHRISTMAS PRESENT.
すっ

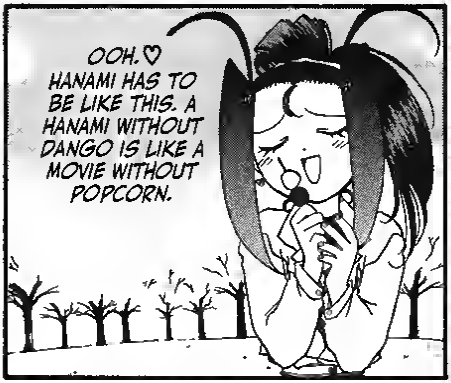
……
ハナ…
THANK YOU, MASTER TASUKE!
I'M SO HAPPY. ♡
とぉぉぉぉぉ
KHOOOHAN!
YOU WERE REALLY FINE, BROTHER!?
STOP PUSHING ME.

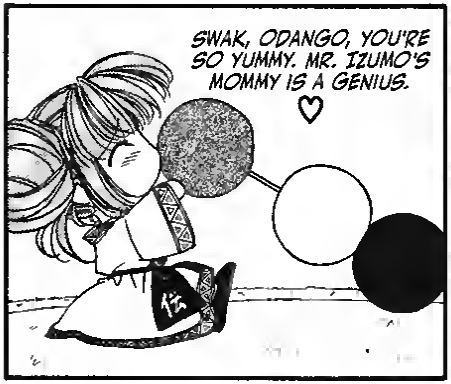
13 A DIFFERENT KIND OF LOVE...?
MERRY CHRISTMAS.♡
SHAO, MORNING...?
PLEASE COME! HURRY!
MASTER TASUKE, MASTER TASUKE, GOOD MORNING!
CHIRP
CHIRP
I HOPE NEXT YEAR IS WONDERFUL TOO. ♡
SEE, LOOK!! THE STRING YOU GAVE ME YESTERDAY WORKS PERFECTLY! ♡
BEING USED AS A STRING TO TIE THE TOP OF THE BAG OF KATSUOBUSHI SO IT DOESN'T GET STALE.
M-MY NECKLACE...

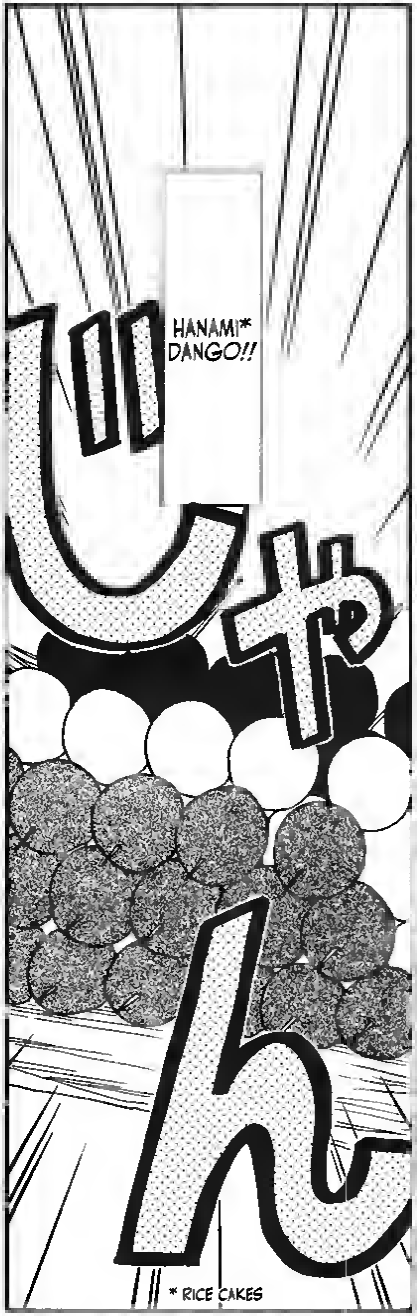

SIDE STORY 2
RUUAN AND RISHU'S HANAMI...?!

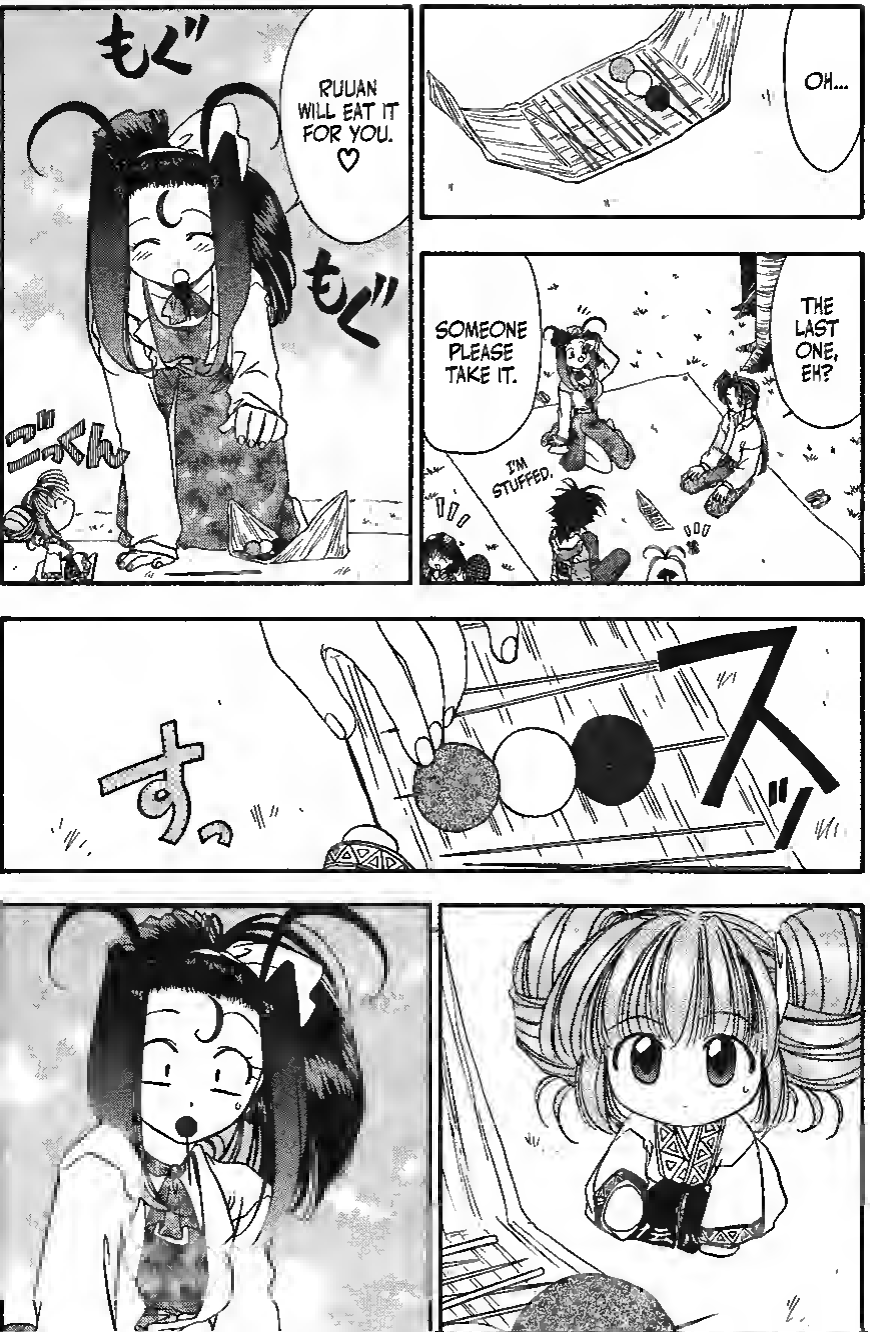
IT'S SPRING..
..WE'RE GOING TO GO HAVE A HANAMI AT A MOUNTAIN CLOSE BY ♡
ぞろぞろ
...AND THE WEATHER'S REALLY NICE TODAY SO...
AND...
THE GENTLE SUNLIGHT...
THE FLOWER PETALS THAT DANCE AND FALL...
...THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF A HANAMI...


NOW, NOW, PLEASE HAVE SOME, EVERYONE.
MY MOTHER LIKES TO MAKE THINGS LIKE THIS.


OOH.♡ HANAMI HAS TO BE LIKE THIS. A HANAMI WITHOUT DANGO IS LIKE A MOVIE WITHOUT POPCORN.

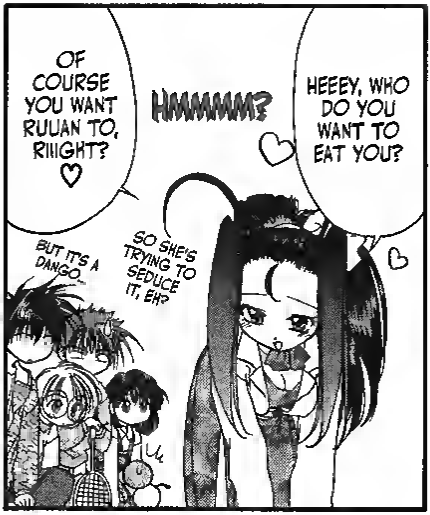

SWAK, ODANGO, YOU'RE SO YUMMY. MR. IZUMO'S MOMMY IS A GENIUS. ♡

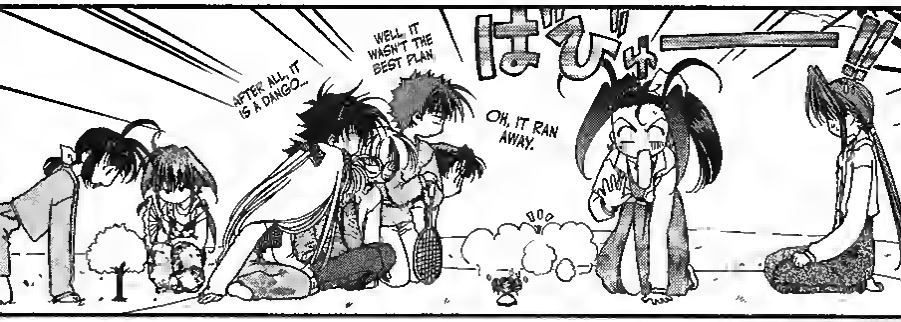

HANAMI* DANGO!!
* RICE CAKES


もぐ
RUUAN WILL EAT IT FOR YOU. ♡
もぐ
OH...
THE LAST ONE, EH?
SOMEONE PLEASE TAKE IT.
I'M STUFFED.
すっ

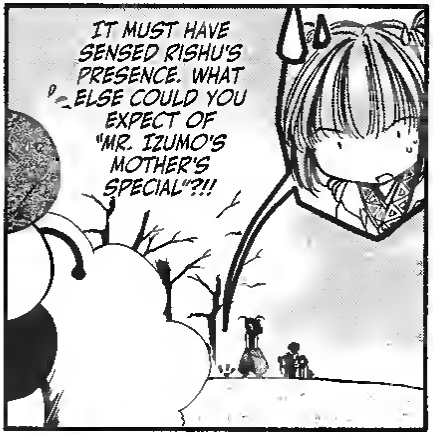
YOUTEN-SHIN...
...SHOU-RAI!!
YOU STINKY LITTLE GARBAGE GNOME!!
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT TRYING TO TAKE MY DANGO!!
MR. IZUMO'S MOTHER WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU IF YOU LAY A HAND ON RISHU'S DANGO!!
HOW DOES SHE KNOW THAT?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!!
ヒカ
!!
WOW, HOW CUTE.
LIH, IT'S A BOY.
M-MR. ODANGO...
IZUMO
ん!?

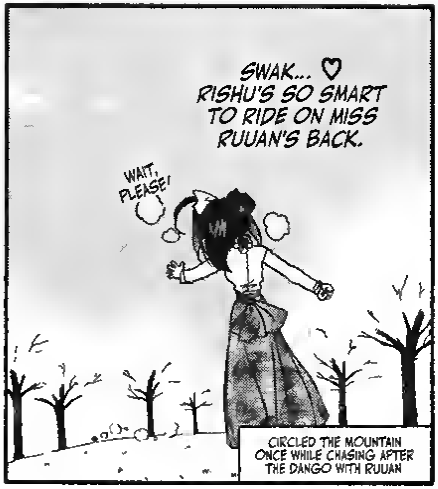
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS GRAB IT FROM BEHIND!!
GO, RISHU!!


OF COURSE YOU WANT RUUAN TO, RIIIGHT?
HMMMM?
HEEEY, WHO DO YOU WANT TO EAT YOU?
BUT IT'S A DANGO...
SO SHE'S TRYING TO SEDUCE IT, EH?

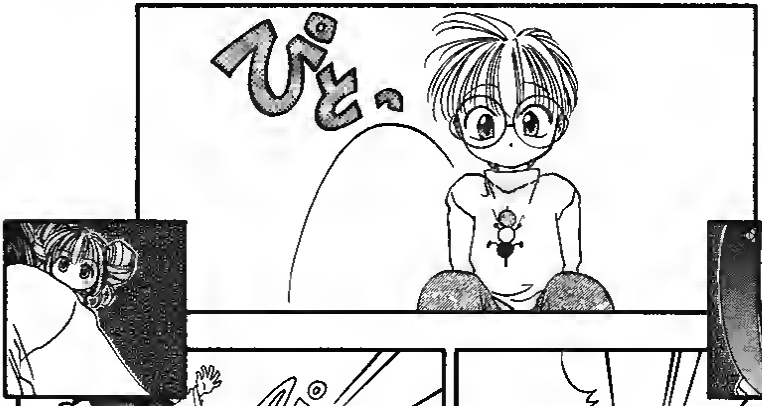

AFTER ALL, IT IS A DANGO...
WELL, IT WASN'T THE BEST PLAN
はひゅ
OH, IT RAN AWAY.
POP

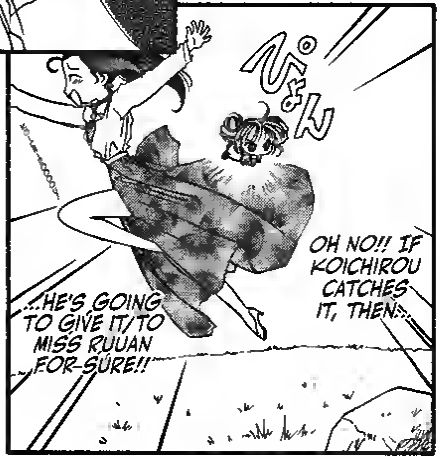
YOU HAVE SOME NERVE EMBARRASSING ME!! I'M GOING TO EAT YOU BEFORE THE GARBAGE GNOME, NO MATTER WHAT!!


IT MUST HAVE SENSED RISHU'S PRESENCE. WHAT ELSE COULD YOU EXPECT OF "MR. IZUMO'S MOTHER'S SPECIAL"?!!


SWAK... ♡
RISHU'S SO SMART TO RIDE ON MISS RUUAN'S BACK.
WAIT, PLEASE!
CIRCLED THE MOUNTAIN ONCE WHILE CHASING AFTER THE DANGO WITH RUUAN

HE'S A SPEEDY LITTLE DEVIL!
COME BACK HERE, YOOOO-UUUU!
CIRCLED THE MOUNTAIN ONCE CHASING AFTER THE DANGO

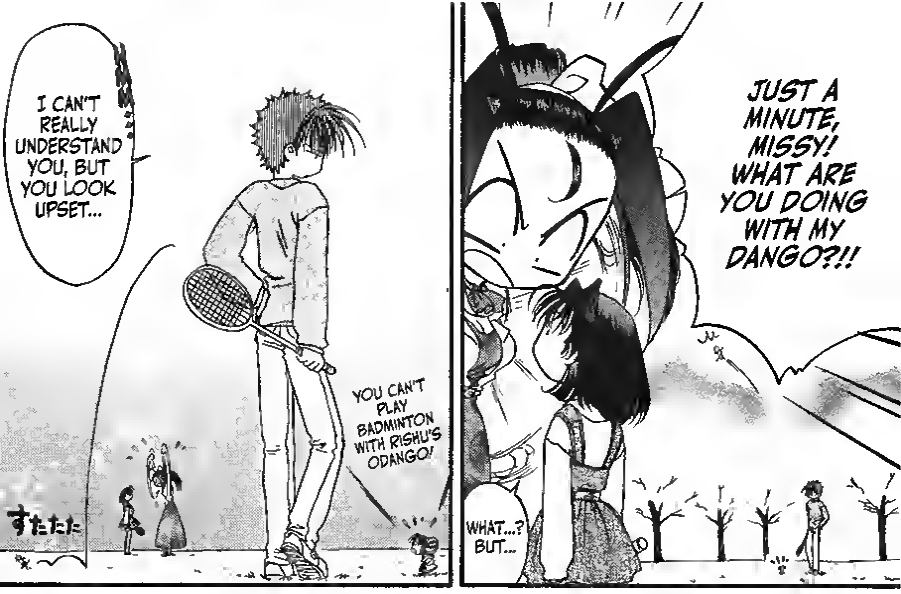

ぴと。


ぴょん
OH NO!! IF KOICHIROU CATCHES IT, THEN...
...HE'S GOING TO GIVE IT TO MISS RUUAN FOR SURE!!

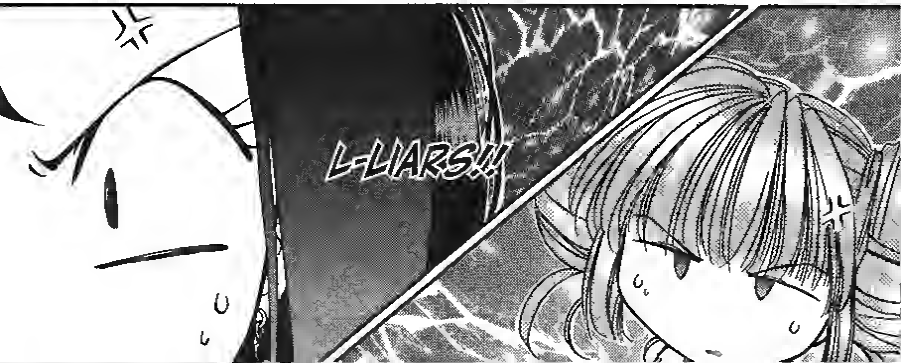
KOICHIROU, STOP THAT HANAMI DANGO!!
びゅー!!
WHAT?

MISS RUUAN, I CAUGHT IT!
NICE WORK, KOICHIROU!
RISHU
RISHU WILL FIRE UP RISHU'S SPECIAL CATCH-THAT-DANGO POWER!!
キャッチ!!
WHEW. THAT WAS CLOSE. IT ALMOST HIT ME.
LUCKY.
WHOA!!
COME ON!!
ボトッ
SNUFF
HERE I GO!
KOICHIROU!! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?!!
WAIT, MR. ODANGO!
BUT, MISS RUUAN...

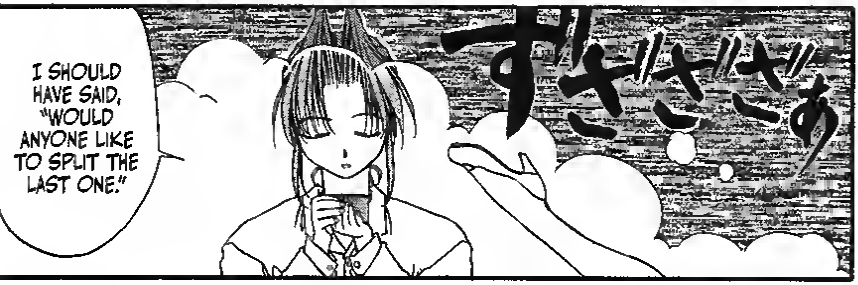
すぽーん
OOF! DANGO SMASH!!
MR. ODANGO! WHERE ARE YOU?
WHERE'D YOU DISAPPEAR TO, HANAMI DANGO?
DRAT.
THERE IT IS!!!
OH!!
NO PROBLEM!!
びゅん

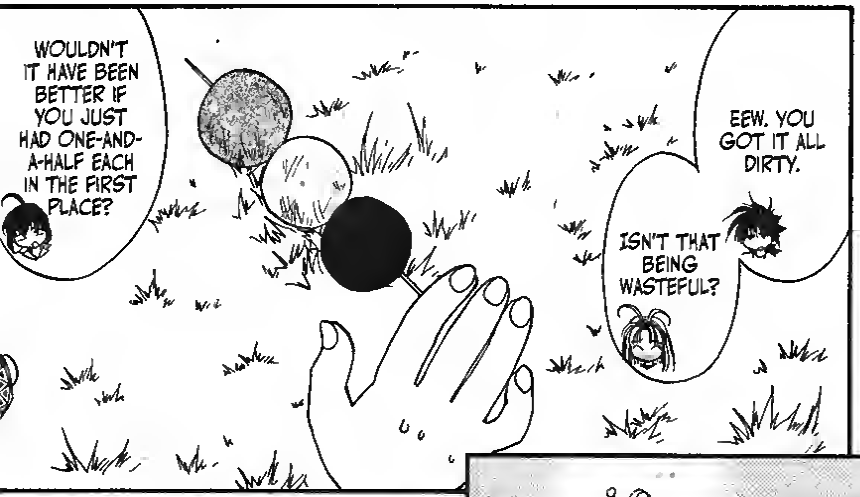

I CAN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND YOU, BUT YOU LOOK UPSET...
すたたた
YOU CAN'T PLAY BADMINTON WITH RISHU'S ODANGO!
JUST A MINUTE, MISSY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY DANGO?!!
WHAT...? BUT...

THE DANGO SAID THAT?

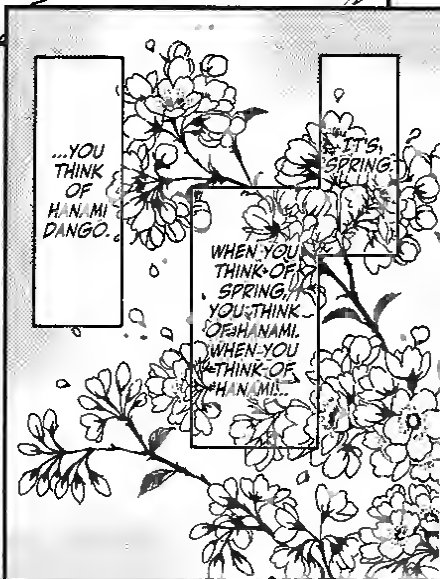


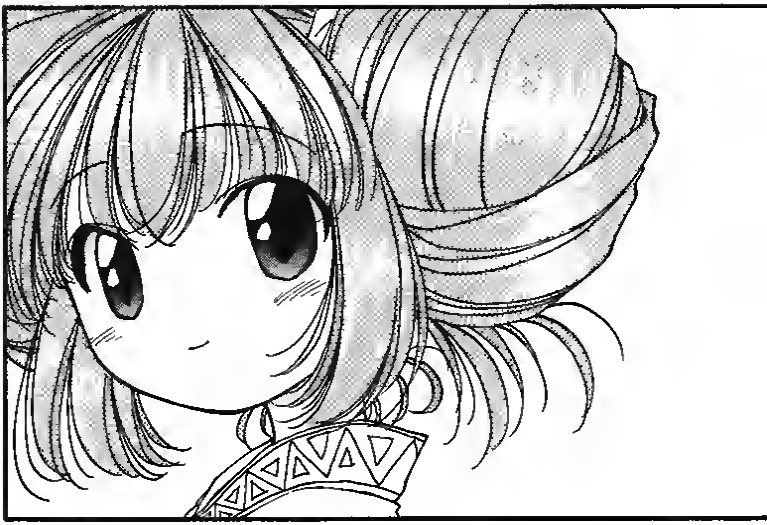
HUMPH! NOW YOU CAN'T RUN OR HIDE!!
THAT'S TRUE.
I'LL UNDO THE YOUTEN-SHIN!!
I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANY-MOOOORE!!
NGH, NGH.
AND NOW...
THE FASTEST ONE WINS!
OH! THAT'S NOT FAIR!!


すぺしゃる
I SHOULD HAVE SAID, "WOULD ANYONE LIKE TO SPLIT THE LAST ONE."

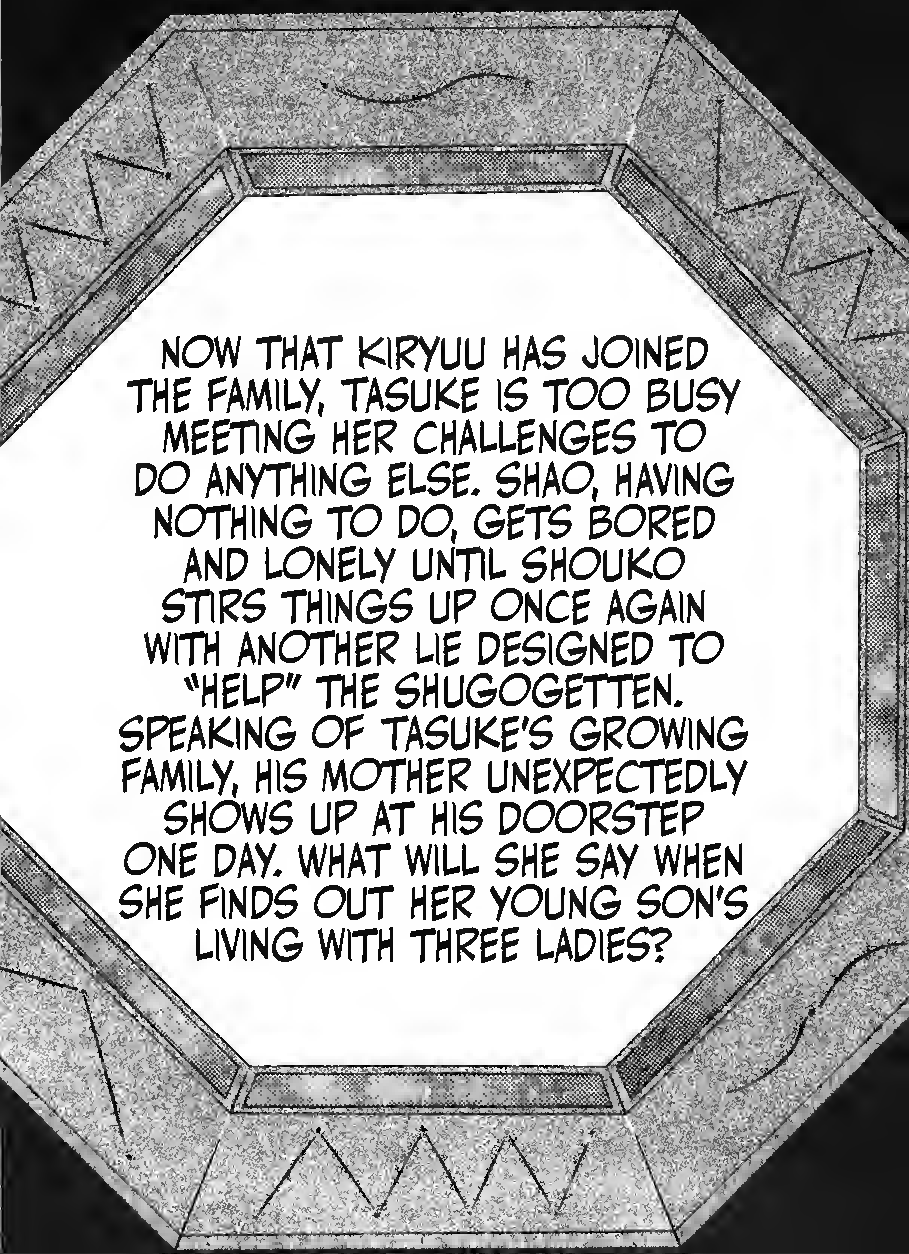

WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER IF YOU JUST HAD ONE-AND-A-HALF EACH IN THE FIRST PLACE?
EEW. YOU GOT IT ALL DIRTY.
ISN'T THAT BEING WASTEFUL?

WHISPER
LET'S WASH IT AND EAT IT LATER. ♡
MISS RUUAN, YOU'D GO THAT FAR FOR A DANGO?
RISHU ISN'T THAT DESPERATE


...YOU THINK OF HANAMI DANGO.
IT'S SPRING.
WHEN YOU THINK OF SPRING, YOU THINK OF HANAMI. WHEN YOU THINK OF HANAMI...



IF YOU'RE PURE OF HEART YOU'LL SEE THIS NEXT VOLUME PREVIEW...


NOW THAT KIRYUU HAS JOINED THE FAMILY, TASUKE IS TOO BUSY MEETING HER CHALLENGES TO DO ANYTHING ELSE. SHAO, HAVING NOTHING TO DO, GETS BORED AND LONELY UNTIL SHOUKO STIRS THINGS UP ONCE AGAIN WITH ANOTHER LIE DESIGNED TO "HELP" THE SHUGOGETTEN. SPEAKING OF TASUKE'S GROWING FAMILY, HIS MOTHER UNEXPECTEDLY SHOWS UP AT HIS DOORSTEP ONE DAY. WHAT WILL SHE SAY WHEN SHE FINDS OUT HER YOUNG SON'S LIVING WITH THREE LADIES?

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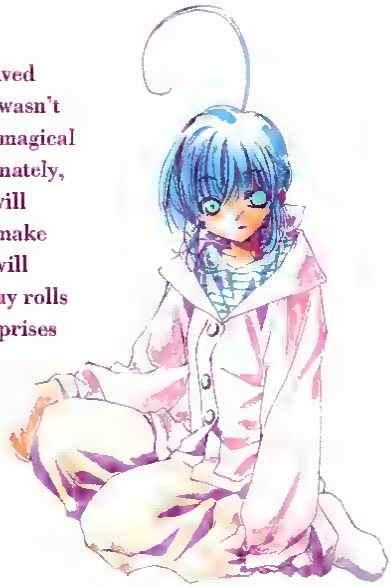

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